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*A critical exploration of Facebook: The corporation and its users.*

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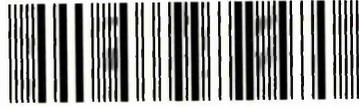
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**A Critical Exploration of Facebook: The Corporation and its Users**  
**Ekaterina Netchitailova**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Sheffield Hallam University  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

This study looks at Facebook by applying critical media/cultural studies (Kellner, 1995). Facebook is analysed, on the one hand, as a corporation pursuing profit, and, on the other hand, as a tool used by millions of people for all kinds of reasons. As a result, a dialectic emerges between looking at Facebook as a part of capitalism, and looking at Facebook as a part of popular culture. By analysing Facebook as a corporation, underpinned by theoretical knowledge derived from critical studies of communication and media (Fuchs 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) this study will look at Facebook from a macro point of view. Is Facebook capable of reinforcing democracy? What role does it play in terms of surveillance? What kind of power can we find on Facebook? To what extent does Facebook mirror and reinforce some aspects of social life, situated within capitalistic system?

Theory is combined with empirical data derived from ethnographic observation and interviews with users of Facebook. While Facebook is first of all a corporation, whose main drive is profit, people log on to it on a daily basis to have fun, to connect with friends, to join causes or in order to participate in a debate. What role does Facebook play in the daily lives of its users, why do people use it and what can Facebook tell us about friendship, community and identity? And finally, how can we call a Facebook user which works for Facebook as a corporation, by providing data for it, and deriving benefits from using it at the same time?

By combining both macro and micro points of view, the aim of this study is to reach a better understanding of such a phenomenon as Facebook, and thus, of a society in which it is used.

The purpose is to look at Facebook as both cultural artefact and cultural context (Hine 2000) and to see what role it plays in the contemporary society and in the daily lives of its users.

On a more specific, UK-based level, the aim is to examine one new cultural form, Facebook, as a case study which will provide insights into perceptions of some of the dynamics of wider social cultural understandings and the changing patterns of everyday life as a result of the increasing role of the Internet in contemporary society.

## Table of Content

A Critical Exploration of Facebook: The Corporation and its Users.....	1
Abstract.....	2
Table of Content .....	1
Candidate's Statement.....	4
Introduction .....	1
Facebook – A Wonderful tool to stay in touch?.....	1
Facebook – a reflection of capitalism? .....	3
Self-Involvement.....	3
Application.....	6
Part I: Context .....	14
Chapter One: Brief history of the Internet and Facebook .....	15
Chapter Two: Research on the Internet and online social networks.....	22
Chapter Three: Towards Critical Media/Cultural studies.....	29
Facebook as a conduit of ideology of capitalism.....	29
Critical studies .....	34
The medium is the message.....	37
Push Theory of media effects .....	40
The user within Facebook and popular culture .....	43
Chapter Four: Facebook as a Case Study .....	50
Facebook as a cultural context and a cultural form.....	54
Data Collection .....	57
Chapter Five: Ethical considerations .....	64
Part II: Analysis and Interpretation .....	67
Chapter Six: Facebook and Power.....	69
Definition of Power in the age of 'informational capitalism' .....	70
Centralised and diffuse notions of power .....	70
Externalised power on Facebook.....	80
Foucault and diffuse power .....	89
Facebook' users: customers or Facebook's product?.....	99
Self-Discovery and Autonomy on Facebook .....	111
Profiles .....	112

Performance.....	117
Publicity.....	120
Categorization .....	121
Autonomy .....	124
Conclusion.....	128
Chapter Seven: Facebook user as an empathetic worker .....	130
Facebook as a reflection of our offline world.....	131
Flâneur, badaud and empathetic worker .....	136
Facebook experiences .....	146
Photographs on Facebook.....	148
Constructing Personal and group memory.....	149
Creating and Maintaining Social Relationships .....	150
Self-Expression and Self-presentation .....	151
The Wall and Status Update .....	152
What does Facebook tell us about friendship?.....	159
Facebook and Friendship .....	159
Facebook - is it replacing face-to-face meeting? .....	169
Conclusion .....	177
Chapter Eight: Privacy, Surveillance and Facebook.....	178
The Question of privacy and surveillance in the age of the Internet .....	179
Facebook and surveillance. The Institutional privacy .....	182
Social Privacy on Facebook.....	193
Collapsing of contexts on Facebook.....	194
Contextual Privacy .....	208
Conclusion .....	214
Chapter Nine: Democracy and Pluralism on Facebook.....	216
Democracy and Facebook.....	217
Pluralism and Diversification.....	228
But is there a potential?.....	233
Conclusion .....	238
General Conclusion .....	239
References.....	245
Appendices .....	1

Data Collection .....	1
Self-Involvement .....	5
Interview analysis .....	7
Interview with Charlotte .....	7
Introduction .....	7
The Interview.....	10
Conclusion .....	18
Interview with Charlotte (transcript).....	18
Interview with Joanna .....	28
Introduction .....	28
Interview.....	29
Conclusion .....	37
Interview with Joanna (Transcript) .....	37

## Candidate's Statement

This thesis examines the phenomenon of Facebook and critically assesses what Facebook might reveal about certain key aspects of social life. In this sense Facebook provides a case study where a particular cultural form is analysed within capitalism. To what extent are we free when we use Facebook and how does the usage of Facebook reinforce or change some social patterns? The goal of the research is to reach a better understanding of the current society and look at important issues such as privacy, the role of the Internet, capitalism, popular culture, friendship, community and identity. How does the Internet influence these things and what can Facebook tell us about them? All material consulted is referenced at the end of the thesis.

*This thesis is dedicated to my parents who always encouraged me to do the best I could do, and, thank you, mom (mamochka), for pushing me in this academic direction. Without you, there would be no thesis, you know it!*

## Introduction

### Facebook – A Wonderful tool to stay in touch?

Since its creation in 2003 Facebook has become a part of the daily routine of millions of people. Many people continue to join the network in order to communicate with friends and relatives, have fun, participate in a group discussion, see what is happening in the lives of their friends, or simply in order to check the local salsa classes. Facebook has over one billion users, with over 50% logging in Facebook every day (Digitalbuzz 2011 and BBC 2012) and is the most popular online social network at the time of writing this thesis.

When Facebook first became public in 2006, it had the following greeting on its site: “Facebook helps you to connect and share with the people in your life.” (Facebook 2011). This was replaced at some point with another statement which says: “We honour the everyday things that bring us together and celebrate everywhere opening up and connecting” (Facebook 2012).

The main emphasis from both statements is on sharing, on connecting and on having fun.

And it's what most users are indeed doing on the network. They connect with friends, share their pictures with each other, read each other's status updates and have fun.

As danah boyd says regarding the use of online social networks:

“People flock to them to socialize with their friends and acquaintances, to share information with interested others, and to see and be seen. While networking socially or for professional purposes is not the predominant practice, there are those who use these sites to flirt with friends-of-friends, make business acquaintances, and occasionally even rally other for a political cause” (boyd 2010, p. 1).

Since it became public in 2006, Facebook has become a part of the everyday life of many people. People not only communicate with friends and acquaintances on the network, but also join groups, participate in debates, and even organise demonstrations through Facebook. Not only ordinary people are

active on Facebook, but also companies and political parties. Facebook was attributed to having played an important, if not crucial role, in some recent political events, such as the Arab Spring and The Occupy Movement.

Facebook more concretely links the online and offline worlds than previous online social networks (such as Friendster, which will be discussed in more details in the chapter about the history of the Internet). The network asks for a real name and once you join it, it allows you to connect with people you might know in real life. It allows building an online community based on offline connections. In one place you can see all your close friends, acquaintances, colleagues and family, depending on how you decide to build your network. Facebook allows you to measure your popularity, upload as many pictures as you want, gives you all the latest gossip and “prevents us from making bad choices, silly mistakes and behaving in ways our mothers wouldn’t approve off” (Herman and York 2008, p. 18).

Most accounts in the press as well as casual talks among friends point to the social, *fun* aspects of Facebook. Since its creation Facebook has become the subject of many books and articles, both in academic circles and outside and where Facebook emerges as a wonderful tool, which helps us to connect, to build better communities, to have fun and to share. Facebook is often depicted as a democratic tool used successfully by ordinary people, as shown by such events as the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement, and the Orange Revolution, as a means to boost one’s creativity and self-expression, and as a network which leads to better democracy.

Most studies of Facebook (for instance, boyd 2010) celebrate its positive aspects, such as its democratic potential, the possibility to express oneself, opportunity to rethink one's identity, etc. Facebook is seen as a Web 2.0 tool where users not only consume its content but also contribute to its creation. This led some researchers to proclaim that we live in an era of convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence, where the users have much to say about the creation of the content and this in turn, should boost free expression and democracy. Web 2. and web 3. tools, as proclaimed by some researchers, allow users to be active instead of passive.

## Facebook – a reflection of capitalism?

On the other side of the spectrum, critical studies of media and communication (Fuchs 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, Andrejevic 2009, Scholz 2008, Fuchs and Dyer-Witheford 2012), see Facebook, first of all, as a corporation, whose main drive is profit accumulation. The profit is mostly made through advertising and advertisers use targeted advertising by accumulating data on the users of the network. Users on Facebook are not only its customers but also its product, which is sold to advertisers for profit accumulation. Users can be seen as working for free for the network, by supplying information to advertisers, by providing unpaid services and by providing data for researchers and marketers.

Moreover, not only advertisers accumulate data on the users but, as some recent developments show, also different governments seem to have an increasing interest in what we are doing online (discussed in detail in the chapter on privacy) and this brings a question about surveillance. Is Facebook indeed such a wonderful tool, or does it simply reflect the expansion of the surveillance society? In what kind of democracy are we living if all data which we post on a so-called 'democratic' tool is processed, accumulated, analysed and sold to advertisers? Are we indeed *free* if the police and the governments can monitor what we are doing on the network? Can we call something good when it exploits and uses us?

## Self-Involvement

I should describe my own presence on Facebook, as my own experience with Facebook influenced this study and helped me to form opinions in this thesis.

As many other users (at least the users with whom I discussed the network) I joined it out of curiosity to start with. I did see the benefits of using it, at least, for me, since it allowed me to reconnect with friends I made in four different countries where I lived, but it also did leave me suspicious in the beginning. Should I join the network, with a dubious privacy policy (and yes, I read it, even before thinking of doing a PhD about it), public display of all my friends as well as my pictures, and what was it really all about, I asked for the first two months or so. However, this quickly changed when I decided to embrace it. After a small deliberation on my part I decided that I had nothing to lose. It was unlikely that governments and spy organizations would take a particular interest in my

profile, but, on the other hand, my friends probably would. And that was what triggered me to start using the network wholeheartedly so to speak. Privacy policy was quickly forgotten (overshadowed by the benefits of using the network), while I dwelled upon my profile picture, my likes and dislikes, reconnected with some friends and thought about my 'public' persona. Facebook did in fact, despite its categorisation of profiles (something at which I look in the chapter on profiles), led me to think about my identity and about how I wanted to present myself to my friends or anyone else who would stumble upon my profile.

Reconnecting with friends was the biggest motivation for me to use Facebook, but being single at that time (I started to use the network in 2007) I did not mind meeting new and interesting people and even dating via Facebook. I never dated in the end through the use of the network, but I did make new friendships and met some fascinating people.

Of course, as probably anyone else, I had some small problems due to my engagement with the network. There was this incident when someone tagged me in the picture where I looked larger than life and was decorated with pimples (that, after I was so busy with uploading nice, beautiful, pictures of myself for months). There was this problem with a stalker who would create dozens of different accounts in order to get among my 'friends' on Facebook. And as is the case of the vast majority of users on Facebook, I did have status updates which I later regretted.

But it seemed that all my friends were on Facebook. True, I did reconnect with some people with whom I did not have a particular desire to communicate, but there were also 'lucky' finds, like my best friend from Russia with whom I lost touch when I moved to Brussels to study. But now, there was Facebook, and it was much easier to communicate in this way as well as more interesting. From her pictures I could see how she evolved during all these years, what she experienced and how her life was now. Yes, Facebook was definitely for me not only a very useful tool but also a way to present to my friends what I was doing as well as an important part of my life. Facebook became a break from work I was doing, a fun activity but also a portal of news. It was through Facebook that

I learned about the Occupy Movement, about protests in Russia in regards to the latest elections and many other things, which, otherwise, I could have missed.

My relationship with Facebook was not that smooth though, influenced in part by the fact that I was doing a thesis about it. When I started the thesis I was in love with Facebook, but the more I wrote about it, the more I was thinking about the pitfalls of the network. At some point I realised that Facebook is a perfect manifestation of capitalism, where Facebook was using its users, including me, and tried to limit my own involvement with the network. After all as a PhD student in sociology looking at Facebook I had to give an example of some kind of intelligence. Status updates describing my activity during my lunch hour did not seem fun anymore, but more as a reflection of stupidity than anything else. Putting any information on the network looked now to be dangerous, prone to problems. After all, after the completion of my PhD I was hoping to get a serious job. Facebook was using me, while I was uploading my pictures and describing the books I liked.

But this attitude also changed after a while. There were, of course, also interviews with participants and my own experience within the network. Everyone, it seems, likes Facebook to a certain extent. The involvement with the network is different for everyone, depending on the life circumstances, personality and even the amount of friends, but it looks like almost anyone who subscribes to the network derives some benefits from using it.

And this, of course, reflects the controversy around Facebook. Yes, Facebook is a corporation which uses its users as its product, but it is also a network which allows people to unite for all kinds of causes and spread news about important (and sometimes not) events. Yes, Facebook's privacy policy is ambiguous and we do tend to reveal probably too much about ourselves, but at the same time it allows us to stay in touch with our friends, upload our pictures and have fun. Yes, Facebook can also be used for bullying and dubious causes (including child pornography), but if we look at the Internet in general and offline life we can see the same manifestations outside Facebook.

So, what is Facebook? Is it a network which allows us to stay in touch, a capitalistic corporation which uses us, a wonderful tool for democracy building, a portal for bullying and celebration of unworthy causes, inundating us with news and thus, substituting knowing about the issue for action on it, or something else entirely?

### **Application**

As the reader will see though the thesis, this question is difficult to answer. Facebook is all these things and more, much more. Facebook can be looked upon using a Marxist theory, but also from the angle of 'celebratory participatory culture'. Facebook can be analysed from a macro point of view, but also micro, and Facebook can also be researched for its characteristics - have the attributes of the network as such led to some changes in our society?

I am not planning to answer these questions for definite, because as we will see Facebook is a contested terrain and can be analysed indeed from all kinds of angles and perspectives. But my aim is to combine in one place all these different approaches and views, to have, in fact, if not a definite understanding, then at least a better one, and to reflect on the controversy surrounding Facebook. My main approach is critical theory, and thus, I view Facebook first of all as a capitalistic corporation, reflecting the tendencies of 'informational capitalism' (Fuchs 2011, 2012), but it does not mean that Facebook cannot be enjoyed by its users on a daily basis. The question is, however, whether this enjoyment is for a greater good or reinforces us further and further into exploitation and surveillance. And this is how I am going to look at Facebook in this study.

By showing and discussing the exploitative aspects of Facebook, I also find it important to highlight the social side of the network. Again and again, many people told me how Facebook brings fun into their lives, allowing them to reconnect with friends, create groups and shout to the whole world what one is having for lunch.

Accounts of the network in academia are either optimistic or pessimistic, but the truth is that Facebook is many different things, for many different people in different contexts and from different angles. Analysing Facebook by only

focussing on exploitation depicts it as a profit driving machine, which is not that interested in people but in what they can give as data. This is true, and this is what Facebook is about, but talk about Facebook to a random person or open your news feed and you will notice that some revolutions are organised through the network, some new pages are created on a daily basis and some people are simply having lots of fun while being there.

And that is how I am going to analyse Facebook in this thesis. I am combining critical studies of media and communication (Fuchs) with accounts of popular culture, to build on what I call *Critical Media/Cultural studies*. Douglas Kellner defines them in the following way: "A critical media/cultural studies approach reads, interprets, and critiques its artefacts in the context of the social relations of production, distribution, consumption, and use of which they emerge. The dialectic of text and context requires a critical social theory that articulates the interconnections and intersections between the economic, political, social and cultural dimensions of media culture, thus requiring multiple or trans-disciplinary optics" (Kellner 2009, p. 20). I view Facebook first of all as a capitalistic corporation, based in capitalism and thus reflecting the current socio-political settings. On the other hand, Facebook also reflects societal aspects embedded in the daily lives of ordinary people. Friendships are formed and broken on the network, we think of and maybe even form our identity there, we watch others on the network as in a mini-reality TV, and we also do indeed have fun there.

Critical Media/Cultural studies as I apply them throughout the thesis look at Facebook both as a part of capitalism, but also as a part of popular culture. On the one hand, every time we log in Facebook we support the capitalistic system, but, on the other hand, there are also numerous examples of creativity and self-expression on the network which demonstrate that people interact with each other on the network to create cultural forms. There is an interplay going on inside Facebook. Advertisers and Facebook try to catch the trend of interaction and consumption in order to exploit it, while ordinary people who use Facebook simply log in there to do their own thing, sometimes trivial, but sometimes very significant. Culture can never be contained fully, as the example of Facebook demonstrates. We are exploited on it, but we also create there, build relations and play with our identity.

The main theme of the thesis reflects the contradiction about the network as discussed above. There is juxtaposition between Facebook acting as a corporation within a capitalistic system, and the role of the user within the network. The central argument is that there is always a tension between freedom of choice and autonomy of the user/consumer of a cultural artefact and patterns of consumption which may be argued to be 'another brick in the wall' of capitalist production, and control exercised by corporate elites. Is Facebook a way of building innovative relationships and democracy, or simply strengthening the walls which keep us imprisoned in the current capitalistic system?

As the reader will see, quite often the answer depends on the angle from which Facebook is looked upon. Facebook can be studied from a macro-point of view, analysing it within the current socio-political setting, but also from a micro-point of view, which looks at the experience of users. There are also those who argue that 'medium is the message' (McLuhan 1964) and that the properties of the new technologies are able to bring changes within society. Following on this line of argument, In 2011 Marshall Poe wrote his theory of media affects where he claims that certain media properties can lead to certain societal changes. I am organising my thesis around his theory, mainly for structural purposes and also in order to test the claim that some technological properties can influence practices in a given society. I selected the book of Marshall Poe for the following reasons: firstly, when I was writing this study, Poe's book was the latest addition to a techno-deterministic discourse and due to an easy and accessible language of the book, it was introduced at some undergraduate courses (Peters 2012), secondly, the points of Poe are a clear representation of a techno-determinism which allowed me incorporating the discussion about the role of the properties of a technology in a straightforward way, and thirdly, the points of Poe are organised around clear eight attributes of a medium which permitted me to organise my thesis in a more accessible way.

Since, my thesis, as I will outline bellow is organised around three main elements, Poe's book is a good example of a techno-deterministic discourse, which I will explain in greater details throughout the thesis, and with which I disagree. Techno-determinism looks at how a technology affects the society, without analysing the society as such. As Christian Fuchs argues, it is in fact an

ideology “that substitutes thinking about society by the focus on technology. Societal problems are reduced to the level of technology” (Fuchs 2011). Poe makes it clear that he belongs to this discourse (without though admitting it in plain words) by saying that he has been influenced by works of Marshall McLuhan and Arnold Innis. McLuhan is one of the most famous representatives of techno-determinism and who in his works focussed on the properties of the medium rather than on the society in which it is based. Arnold Innis, however, is often confused with being a techno-deterministic since he argued that the physical properties of media ‘push’ societies into certain directions. Taking Innis’s work though based on this argument is ignoring an entire ‘oeuvre’ of the remarkable sociologist, philosopher and historian, who is often argued to be one of the founders of critical political economy of media (Babe 2004). However, this is exactly what Poe does in his work. He takes only one argument of Innis without really elaborating on it, and by doing so, doesn’t position Innis in an appropriate school of thought, which can be traced to the origins of critical political economy.

Techno-determinism is different from media-centric view, which ignores the society entirely and focusses solely on the medium. The representatives of media-centrism can be both optimistic and pessimistic about a technology, but they still ignore the society in their analysis, regardless of their initial position. An example of a media-centrism is Steven Johnson with his work ‘Future Perfect: The Case for Progress in a Networked Age’ (2012), and which includes a chapter called ‘What does Internet want?’ and where the author argues that the Internet leads to lower costs, breeds algorithms and disseminates information. Techno-determinism, on the other hand, does discuss the society, but doesn’t analyse it and looks at how a particular medium influences a society based mainly on its properties, without taking into account the socio-political context.

For my work I found it important to include the analysis of the properties of such a medium as Facebook, since popular press is full of accounts of techno-determinism. One day, the press blames Facebook and other networks for sabotage and proposes to close them (following the UK August riots) and the next day, Facebook and the Internet are proclaimed the heroes of democracy

(following the event of the Arab Spring). This is confusing and at the same time very ideological, exactly what the internet is.

As a result, in this thesis, I try to combine three points of view (macro, micro and techno-deterministic), by building up on critical media/cultural studies. The main goal of this research is to highlight the controversy surrounding the network and to attempt at a better understanding about what Facebook is and what role it plays in contemporary society. The goal of the research is to show what role Facebook plays as a corporation within capitalism, but also what role it plays in the daily lives of its users. This research is an attempt to analyse Facebook both critically, as a part of capitalism, and as a part of popular culture. Analysed as a case study within the current socio-political context, Facebook should teach us more about the society in which we are living.

On a more specific basis, the research intends to examine three interrelated aspects of the use of Facebook. Cultural elements such as Facebook offer us means to resist and rebel against the oppression of capitalism, but at the same time, they reintegrate us into the familiar pattern of oppression, where resistance becomes controlled. On the other hand, the medium is also the message and the form of technology imposes constraints and choices upon us. Based on these three elements, my main research questions are organised around three themes: Facebook acting as corporation, the role of the user and popular culture within the network, and the analysis of the properties of the network. More specifically, the following questions will be explored:

**Facebook acting as corporation within the capitalistic system:**

1. Firstly, to what extent is Facebook a phenomenon of power, corporate control and surveillance, rather than creativity, multidimensionality and individual agency and even a tool of subversive and liberatory potential? Is Facebook able to strengthen democracy and creativity or is Facebook reinforcing the current status-quo of capitalistic system? To what extent are we free on the network, and are we the users or the product of Facebook?

## **Facebook as part of popular culture:**

2. Secondly, what social impacts, if any, might Facebook and online social networking be having on people's relationships and friendships both online and off? Does Facebook reinforce friendship and what can it tell us about friendship in general? Everyone we add on Facebook is automatically called a friend, but are they real friends? Why do people use Facebook and what benefits do they derive from using it, if any? Is Facebook a waste of time or something which plays an important role in the daily lives of people? To what extent does Facebook reflect the celebrity culture and what can we learn on the basis of Facebook about how new technologies affect our lives? And finally, how can we call a Facebook user within 'informational' capitalism?

## **Properties of the network:**

3. What, if anything, does Facebook tell us about the use of new media technologies and the reflexivity of identity? Can we see new forms of self or merely extensions of the old on online social networks? Do certain dynamics and properties of the network lead us to reconsider how we behave in semi-public places, and therefore, reconsider how we *present* ourselves to the public? Do we merely perform on Facebook or seriously reflect about identities and rethink ourselves? And to what extent can the properties of a new medium, in our case, Facebook, lead to societal changes?

To look at the properties of the network, the thesis is organised around Poe's theory of media effects (2011), as mentioned earlier, and which claims that certain media properties lead to certain societal practices (this will be discussed more in *the context* part). By having applied his theory I wanted to analyse 'society' and technology at the same time, by contributing to the knowledge of critical media/cultural studies. It will emerge from the thesis that the relationship between technology and society is a dialectical one and while certain media properties can facilitate certain social practices, it is the current structure of the society which determines the final use. Therefore, the analysis of the thesis is

based on three main directions as outlined above: analysis of properties of a medium (Facebook), discussion of societal practices (capitalism) and an analysis of the use of technology by ordinary people (popular culture).

The thesis is presented in two main parts: in part one, *the context*, I discuss the current research on Facebook, the basis of what I regard as critical media/cultural studies, my ideological arguments for building up this thesis and for analysing Facebook as a case study, and ethical considerations. Chapter One will describe the history of the Internet and Facebook, highlighting the importance that Facebook plays in the daily lives of millions of people. Chapter Two will look at the academic research on the Internet and Facebook, creating arguments for applying critical media/cultural studies. In Chapter Three I will discuss critical media/cultural studies in depth and their relevance in studying such a phenomenon as Facebook. Chapter Four will provide arguments for analysing Facebook as a case study and gives an outline of my methodology. And finally Chapter Five discusses ethical considerations taken into account in this study.

In part two, I present my *analysis and interpretations*, organised around Poe's theory of media effects, and based on the theory of critical media/cultural studies and empirical findings. This thesis is a combination of theory and data, to expand on the field of critical media/cultural studies, and which takes account of both macro and micro contexts and combines critical theory with the study of popular culture. Thus, in the study of Facebook, both the current context of capitalism has to be discussed and how it influences the usage of such a medium as Facebook, as well as the response of the user to the status-quo. The user is 'trapped' by what is provided by a corporate player, which is seen throughout the Internet, and not only in the case of Facebook. Can the user react to it in an active way, can Facebook be used for democratic and creative purposes and is the user an active player on the network or simply its product, all this will be discussed in this section. Thus, Chapter Six will look at the relations of power within the network, the *externalised* aspect of power on Facebook, the possibility for self-expression, autonomy and presentation of identity within the network. In Chapter Seven I will look in greater details at the activities on Facebook that people conduct on a daily basis and build my

arguments for calling a Facebook user an *empathetic worker*. Chapter Eight will analyse the question of privacy in the context of Facebook and how this concept is changing and influencing our behaviour on the Internet, as well as the surveillance aspect of Facebook. In Chapter Nine I will look at the democratic potential of Facebook and whether it allows for pluralism and diversification of opinions. This is followed by a general conclusion.

## **Part I: Context**

As outlined above this part will describe the macro context in which Facebook is based, provide my theoretical basis and outline my methodology, as well as ethical considerations. I will look at the history of Facebook and how the network which was conceived in a creative stream in a student dormitory expanded to become a big corporate player with its shares now being traded on the stock market, raising questions as to how we should study such a phenomenon as Facebook. Can we ignore the context in which it is based (capitalism) and how it incorporates the ideology of capitalism in its very functioning, or should we continue to celebrate the positive aspects of the network, such as its emphasis on sharing, connecting and maintaining friendships? These questions will be explored in this section, together with other important issues that Facebook raises, such as privacy, the surveillance society and exploitation, to build on my theoretical basis of critical media/cultural studies. I will also explain that a critical theory should take into account the role of the user within a medium and not dismiss entirely the positive aspects that the network offers to millions of people on a daily basis. I will explain in my methodology chapter that Facebook can be analysed as a case study, reflecting the society in which it is based and illuminating us about a number of important things, such as how creativity is exploited under 'informational' capitalism by providing a service-for-free model and how people have fun on the Internet while at the same time working for capitalism.

## **Chapter One: Brief history of the Internet and Facebook**

Since the advancement of the Internet (and since Facebook is a part of the Internet, it is important to look first at the research on the Internet), it has become a major research topic across many disciplines. Internet was considered to signal an emergence of a new era in the history of communication. Some even attributed to the Internet revolutionary qualities, Internet was thought to bring about significant changes in how we communicate, conduct everyday life and do politics.

The Internet is considered to have emerged in the late 1980s, as Bitnet, which was an experimental network funded by the US National Science Foundation. The development of computers though and attempts to have the Internet as we know it now began in the 1950s, with point-to-point communication between mainframe computers and terminals (Hilbert and López 2011). Also research into packet switching began at that time and soon first packet-switched networks started to emerge such as ARPANET, Mark I at NPL in the UK, CYCLADES, Merit Network, Tymnet, and Telenet. The ARPANET, especially, led to the development of protocols for internetworking, when multiple separate networks are joined together into a network of networks.

In 1982 The Internet Protocol Suite was fully established and the concept of a world-wide network called the Internet was developed. Soon access to the ARPANET was expanded and then NSFNET provided access to computer site in the United States from research and education organizations. But commercial Internet service providers began to develop in the late 1980s and 1990s, and in 1995 the Internet was commercialised, with the decommissioning of ARPANET and NSFNET, thus, removing the last restrictions for the use of the Internet.

Since the mid-1990s the Internet rapidly expanded and saw the development of electronic mail, instant messaging, Voice over Internet Protocol, and the World Wide Web with blogs, discussion forums and online social networks. In 1993 the Internet carried only 1% of the information flowing through two-way telecommunication. By 2000 it was 51%, and in 2007 more than 97% of all

telecommunicated information was carried over the Internet (Hilbert and López 2011).

The first online network, called sixdegrees.com was created in January 1997 by a young entrepreneur, Andrew Weinreich. In 1967, Harvard sociologist Stanley Milgram published results of a study about social connections named the 'small world experiment'. The experiment demonstrated that any two people are connected to each other through an average number of 5.5 relations - which popularised the idea of 'six degrees of separation'. On sixdegrees.com one could create a profile, build a Friends list and traverse the Friends network by clicking on the profiles of friends of friends. However, even if the model of the network would be an inspiration for future online networks, sixdegrees.com did not take off. The network was mainly text only and lacked the function of uploading photographs, which would drive future online social networks. The absence of photographs was such a big problem that the creators of sixdegrees.com considered hiring interns in order to upload photographs submitted in hard copy - but this was difficult to implement in practice, and sixdegrees.com was closed at the end of 2001.

In March 2003 Jonathan Abrams founded Friendster, which quickly became popular. As on sixdegrees.com members could create profiles and build a network of friends. In addition, the network featured photos. However, Friendster's popularity started to decline mostly because of 'misunderstanding of its users and the social norms and interactions that the users established on the site' (Zollers 2009, pp. 604-605). This was mainly due to the proliferation of fake profiles on the site, which users created in order to expand their network or in order to have fun. The site's founders were unhappy with the Fakesters and deleted them, which was called the 'Fakester Genocide' and alienated many of its users (boyd 2006).

Friendster's users started to migrate to MySpace, a competitor which was launched later in 2003. One of the early strategies of MySpace was to provide a place for everyone who was rejected from Friendster and a forum for musical bands and their fans, which explained the rapid popularity of the site. Through the bulletins on the network bands could easily and cheaply communicate with

their fans as well as use marketing campaigns, and the site's large community of music artists and fans became one of its distinctive features. On July 18 2005, The News Corporation owned by Rupert Murdoch announced that it was acquiring MySpace for \$580 million.

Facebook was created in 2004 by former Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg. Facebook's concept was based on the physical class directory called 'facebook' which was provided to all Harvard's new students. The network became immediately popular as students always liked the paper version, which allowed them learning more about fellow students.

Initially opened to only Harvard's students, the network was later opened for students from other universities and by 2005 it was the second fastest-growing Internet site, with MySpace being first. In 2005 Facebook was also opened for high school students and finally in April 2006 the site was opened to everyone else.

Although several corporations tried to buy the network, Mark Zuckerberg declined all offers, while striking a partnership with Microsoft, where Microsoft became the exclusive third-party advertising platform.

Today the number of Facebook users is more than one billion and continues to grow (BBC 2012). In the UK there are over 20 million users, with the group of twenty something being the largest group of users, thus contradicting the previous research that Facebook is mostly popular among teens (Clicky Media 2009).

In February 2012 Facebook lodged its initial public offering documents with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (Los Angeles Times blog 2012, Telegraph 2012).

The documents filed with the US Securities and Exchange Commission reveal the company's rapid growth in recent years. Its revenues soared from \$777 million in 2009 to \$3.7 billion in 2011 and its profits quadrupled from \$229 million to \$1 billion in the same period. The total value of the company was valued up to \$100 billion (the financial position of the company will be discussed in greater details in the chapter on power).

The initial public offering (IPO) of Facebook is significant for a number of reasons. On the one hand, it shows indeed the rapid growth of a new technology company and the realisation of an 'American dream', but on the other hand, it also leads to a number of questions. Is something which was created in a student dormitory and incepted through a creative stream, bound to start serving capitalism, if there is enough interest from corporations and governments? Is creativity under capitalism eventually always channelled to serve corporate interests? Despite the fact that the IPO of Facebook did not go as smoothly as it was planned (there was a computer malfunction during the initial trading, some shares were wrongly placed, etc), the IPO of Facebook is considered to be the biggest in Internet history, with some media outlets calling it a 'cultural moment' (Olney 2012). The initiatives taken by Facebook following its IPO, especially in the domain of privacy show that Facebook became one of the 'big guys' playing by the rules of the market rather than a network which was created solely for the benefits of its users. In its new privacy policy adopted in December 2012, Facebook abolished the mechanism which previously allowed voters (users of Facebook) to vote on any proposed changes Facebook makes in its policy making (Facebook 2012). This raises question as to how transparent and democratic Facebook is.

The existence of Facebook has left few people indifferent, at least in the countries where it is used, even if its capitalistic aspect is seldom discussed in popular press. It has led to changes in how we approach our privacy and even to some changes in laws. It also led us to reconsider how we view friendship and community and even to some new terms in language. For instance, in December 2009, the New Oxford American Dictionary declared the verb 'unfriend' (derived from Facebook's usage) as its word of the year, which it defined as: "to remove someone as a 'friend' on a social networking site such as Facebook. As in, 'I decided to unfriend my roommate on Facebook after we had a fight'" (USA Today 2009).

Facebook was also banned in several countries at one point or another, such as in China, Iran, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Syria and Bangladesh. In such countries as Iran Facebook was banned on the grounds that its content was anti-Islamic and contained religious discrimination (NBC News 2012).

Facebook was also banned in many workplaces in Western countries. For instance, in May 2011, HCL Technologies announced that around 50% of British employers had banned Facebook from workplace, on the grounds that the use of Facebook at the workplace can intervene with work and have a negative impact on productivity (The Search Office Space blog 2011).

Facebook's usage has also led to many questions regarding privacy and even to some changes in laws as already mentioned. It is considered by many researchers and the press that users reveal too much on their profiles and that sometimes it can lead to disastrous consequences. There have been many stories in the press describing the problems of employees when they reveal too much on Facebook, the most recent one being published in December 2011 about an employee who was sacked from Apple because of a status update on his profile. In his profile he criticised one of the applications used by Apple (Yahoo Finance 2011). In December 2011 The Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory ruled that Facebook can be used as a valid protocol to serve court notices to defendants (The Age 2008). And in March 2009 the New Zealand High Court allowed for the serving of legal papers via Facebook on Craig Axe by the company Axe Market Garden (The Age 2009).

In July 2011 German authorities started to discuss the prohibition of public events organised on Facebook. This follows several instances when too many uninvited people turned up to attend an event. One of these events involved the 16<sup>th</sup> birthday party of a Hamburg girl, where 1,600 'guests' appeared after she posted the invitation for the event on Facebook for everyone to see. As a result also more than a hundred policemen had to attend in order to control the crowd (CBS News 2011).

Similarly Facebook is reported to have played an important role in some political events, the most recent ones being the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement. While the role of Facebook in the UK August riots is said to have played a minimal role (accounts in media say that it was mostly the BlackBerry Messenger service which was used in organising the riots) (Halliday 2011), its role in the Arab Spring and Occupy Movement is discussed in the press as being very significant (which is under question if one reads the book by Evgeny

Morozov, 2011, about an ambiguous role that online social networks played in the Arab Spring). For instance, The New York Times reported that Facebook played a crucial role in the Arab Spring by disseminating information about the protests and even organising demonstrations through its pages (Kirkpatrick 2011).

The role of Facebook (and also Twitter) in the Occupy movement has also been highlighted on many occasions. The Occupy Movement, originated as US day of Rage, was initially published as an idea on news blog Wikileaks Central in March 2011, to organise protests against economic and social inequality. But its organisation rapidly spread through online social networks, with Facebook playing the most important role.

Neal Caren, an assistant professor of sociology at UNC's College of Arts and Sciences and a doctoral student, Sarah Gaby, have been studying the spread of protests and the role of social networking sites in the Occupy movement and found that Facebook has been the site which was used the most for organising protests and for distributing information about the movement (The University of North Carolina website 2012).

The above examples demonstrate the importance that Facebook started to play in the daily lives of millions of people. People log in to communicate with friends, to create groups, protests, participate in discussions or simply in order to have fun. However, they also raise a number of questions, such as the changing notion of privacy with the advancement of new media technologies, the force of creativity under capitalism, and whether Facebook, which through its IPO assured its role as a big capitalistic organisation, would allow the 'Arab Spring' to happen in Western Europe or the US.

The accounts in the press about Facebook seldom look at it in regards to socio-political environment, such as its role within capitalism. As will be shown in the next chapter, accounts of Facebook in academia are also mostly limited to looking at Facebook from a micro-point of view, either celebrating its participatory qualities without taking into account the oppressive side exercised by Facebook on its users through its privacy policy, and thus, acting within capitalism, or dismissing it as a dangerous tool, especially for privacy reasons,

without looking at the aspect of surveillance. The new field of Critical Media and Communication studies led by Christian Fuchs looks at Facebook from the point of view of domination and oppression within capitalism, and the accounts emerging from this field point to a real controversy around Facebook. To what extent are we free on Facebook if all our data on it is accumulated and sold for commercial purposes?

## **Chapter Two: Research on the Internet and online social networks**

It is important to have an overview of the research of the Internet, as many themes which dominated the initial research are still important today and provide a better understanding of the research on online social networks, including Facebook.

The beginning of the research on the Internet was dominated by either utopian or dystopian approaches, and in a large way, this continues today. Since its inception Facebook has met with controversies. Thus, the enthusiasts proclaim that Facebook gives people more opportunity to make their voices heard, that it has the potential to recreate Habermas's public sphere and build democracy, while its critics argue that Facebook creates an intentional community where we isolate ourselves from hearing views and perspectives different from ours, that Facebook puts us in contact with people from whom, otherwise, we would like not to hear, that we share more about our personal lives than we should and that Facebook cocoons us further into our homes, away from real friends and events.

Till 1998 especially, the research and views of the press and politicians were either in optimistic or pessimistic camps. The Internet was seen either as a 'bright shining above everyday concerns..., a technological marvel, thought to be bringing a new Enlightenment to transform the world" (Wellman 2011, p. 18) or a technological evil, destroying community life, deteriorating literacy, causing political and economic alienation, and social fragmentation.

Some proclaimed at that time that the Internet was a new frontier of civilisation, a digital domain that would foster democratic participation, bring down big business and end economic and social inequalities. Many politicians shared this view, with Vice President Al Gore saying in 1995:

"These highways - or, more accurately, networks of distributed intelligence - will allow us to share information, to connect, and to communicate as a global community. From these connections we will derive robust and sustainable economic progress, strong democracies, better solutions to global and local

environmental challenges, improved health care, and - ultimately - a greater sense of shared stewardship of our small planet" (in Silver 2000, p. 2).

Researchers who were optimistic about the potential of the Internet pointed to its capacity to bring people together, but under different circumstances than face-to-face, and also to its ability to boost creativity and self-fulfilment.

Rheingold (1991, 1993), while mentioning the possible pitfalls of the Internet (commodification, online surveillance, danger to lose oneself in the online world and alienating oneself from offline reality), remains enthusiastic throughout his studies about the medium and especially about its potential to bring different people together in one place and was among the first to coin the term 'virtual community', which he defines as a place where people can meet friends, make plans, exchange knowledge, provide emotional support, find friends and do basically "everything people do when people get together, but...do it with words on computer screens, leaving...bodies behind" (Rheingold 1993, p. 58).

Shortly after the study of Rheingold another important study followed, made this time by Sherry Turkle (1995). While having a slightly different focus than Rheingold, her studies also focussed on online communities and found that the Internet allows people to exercise a more true identity, boost their creativity and can provide important emotional support in someone's life.

At the other end of the spectrum, researchers were pointing to dangers of the Internet. For instance, Birkerts (1994) warned that the Internet would lead to declining literacy and take us away from reality (Silver 2000). Stoll (1995) asked us to log off, saying that "life in the real world is far more interesting, far more important, far richer, than anything you'll ever find on a computer screen" (in Silver 2000, p. 2). The dystopian view held the opinion that the Internet disconnected us from each other, that people were "interfacing more with computers and TV screens than looking in the face of our fellow human beings" (Texas broadcaster Jim Hightower, in Wellman 2000, p.19).

The studies at that time, besides having either a 'positive' or 'negative' focus, were also characterised by 'isolation' (Wellman 2000). Only things which were happening on the Internet were analysed in order to understand the Internet. Thus, the studies ignored, for instance, how power and status could influence

interactions online. There were few attempts to make a link between online and offline realities.

The second stage in Internet studies which started in 1998 focussed on documenting the proliferation of Internet users and usage. At that time many surveys were conducted by such enterprises as the Pew Internet and American Life Study ([www.pewinternet.org](http://www.pewinternet.org)) and The World Internet Project ([www.worldinternetproject.net](http://www.worldinternetproject.net)). These studies focussed on the number of Internet users, demographics, and the patterns of usage. It was established that socio-economic factors played a significant role in Internet usage (Wellman 2011). Researchers started to look more and more at how the offline world influences online and vice versa and it was established that the Internet was embedded in everyday life. It was no longer the world of Internet wizards but a world of ordinary people who made Internet a part of everyday life.

From 2000s we saw proliferation of diverse Web 2.0 applications, such as YouTube, and online social networks, including Facebook and this marks the third stage in Internet studies. Researchers started to look more into what exactly people do online and more ethnographic studies started to emerge. At the same time, some research focussed purely on Web 2.0 phenomenon, which is celebrated for its capacity for participation. Thus, Henry Jenkins, for instance, argues that “the web has become a site of consumer participation” (Jenkins 2006, p. 137) and that blogging and taking part in different Internet forums expand our perspectives, give us chance to be heard and express our opinions and boost our creative potential. Alex Bruns (2007) talks about the rise of produsage which is the “hybrid user/producer role which inextricably interweaves both forms of participation” (Bruns 2007, p. 21) and that produsage reinforces our collective intelligence, allows everyone to participate in networked culture and can reconfigure democracy as we know it. Clay Shirky (2008) argues that such sites as Flickr, YouTube, MySpace and Facebook create opportunities for public participation, while Tapscott and Williams (2006) say that the proliferation of the Internet leads to a new economic democracy, in which everyone has a role and can have their say (Fuchs 2011).

On the other hand, we can also see the re-emergence of critical cultural studies of the Internet which point to commodification of the medium, surveillance and the fact that the usage of the internet is often dictated by big corporations, whose main drive is profit generation. These studies are radically different from 'critical' cyberculture studies, led by such scholars as Bell (2001), Silver (2006), and focus on "issues relating to class, exploitation, and capitalism" (Fuchs 2011, p. 9). For Fuchs, 'critical' cyberculture studies lack the profound analysis of the society in which the Internet is based, and "therefore an approach that in its postmodern vein is unsuited for explaining the role of the Internet and communications in the current times of capitalistic crisis. The crisis itself evidences the central roles of the capitalist economy in contemporary society and that the critical analysis of capitalism and socio-economic class should therefore be the central issue for Critical Internet Studies" (Fuchs 2011, p. 10).

The current research on online social networks is heavily dominated by these two trends (either celebrating participatory culture or pointing to domination and exploitation in capitalistic societies in which these mediums are used) and is either uncritical and focusses mostly on the user or analyses mostly the macro-context in which the medium is used.

The research which focuses on the user tends to follow the history of the research on the internet and is either techno-optimistic or techno-pessimistic. In the techno-pessimistic camp (for instance, Debatin et al. 2009, Gross and Allesandro, 2005 Hull et al. 2010) researchers are mainly concerned by privacy issues and argue that it is problematic to have control over information released on such sites as Facebook and therefore, its users can become victims of stalking, re-identification or even identity theft. It can also cause problems while joining a job market and their general view is that online social networks are dangerous and that users put too much information on them. They also say that the Internet is harmful for communities, friendships and promotes individualism, that the Internet leads to alienation, that it is not real, and that it is a waste of time.

Techno-optimistic research on online social networks, on the other hand, argues that online social networks are tools of creativity, self-expression and

empowerment, and that online social networks strengthen communities, friendships and even family ties. danah boyd (2008, 2010) is the most prominent researcher in this field and argues that online social networks are new gathering spaces, and help in identity formation and personal development, especially among young people.

While these studies are very important in order to understand the usage of online social networks, they tend to focus too much on the user forgetting the macro-context. As David Beer argues (2008) this research tends to forget that capitalism plays an important role in analysing such sites as Facebook and does not take into account the societal context of information technology, such as capitalism, surveillance and corporate interests.

This gap seems to be addressed by critical media and communication studies (Fuchs, 2008, 2009, 2011) which look at the Internet and online social networks from a macro point of view and focus on the critique of society as totality and look at such issues as capital accumulation and corporate profits, economic surveillance, and argue that online social network usage is conditioned by “the capitalist economy, the political system, and dominant cultural value patterns and conflicts” (Fuchs 2009, p. 21). Thus, Christian Fuchs's main argument is that as long as there will be corporate interests in technology, its users will be confronted by economic and political surveillance, and it will impact on privacy and freedom. Fuchs is not alone in analysing the Internet within capitalism and by reconstructing Marxian theory for cyberspace. Nick Dyer-Witheford (1999) proposed to use Marx for the analysis of techno-capitalism and called his approach cyber-Marxism. Also Elmer (2002) called to revise the Internet as revolutionary and to analyse the “process of Internet corporatization and portalization” (in Fuchs 2011, p. 5) as well as domination. Mark Andrejevic (2009) proposes 'critical media studies 2.0' that “challenge the uncritical celebration of the empowering and democratizing character of contemporary media by showing how new media are embedded into old forms of domination” (Andrejevic 2009, p. 35), while Paul Taylor (2009) “speaks of Critical Theory 2.0 in order to 'describe the manner in which traditional Critical Theory's (1.0) key insights remain fundamentally unaltered', which would be necessary for challenging web 2.0 optimism” (Fuchs 2011, p. 6).

Both of the above accounts of the research on the Internet are usually classified either under cultural studies or critical political economy. Political economy looks at culture by taking account of socio-political aspect and by focussing on the society in its totality. Cultural studies, traditionally, focussed more on how the culture was embedded in the daily lives of people using it. Due to the poststructuralist turn in cultural studies, where the focus shifted on studying hermeneutics, rhetoric and other forms of textual analysis, at this moment there is a rift between political economy of media and cultural studies (Babe 2009). The proponents of political economy accuse cultural studies scholars of focussing on “high abstraction”, of being “entangled in their presuppositions concerning the self-referentiality of language”, and of being “aloof from and possibly oblivious to power plays, injustices, oppression, and suffering in the real, material world” (Babe 2009, p. 5). Similarly, scholars of cultural studies argue that political economists “engage in economic reductionism: they one-sidedly concentrate on economic factors which they presume *determine* the cultural (ideological) effects of media, without inquiring into the ideological and interpretative practices of audiences” (Babe 2009, p. 5). The famous exchange of articles between the two schools, known as the ‘Colloquy’, which appeared in the March 1995 issue of *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* (Babe 2009), talks about the ‘divorce’ between the two movements, about the unattainable reconciliation and that the two trends were never married in the first place.

However, as Babe (2009) rightly argues in his book where he envisages a new integration between cultural studies and political economy, the main shift is due to poststructuralist trend within cultural studies, and that if we look at the beginning of both cultural studies and political economy, we can see that both movements “were fully integrated, consistent, and mutually supportive...” (Babe 2009, p. 4).

With such a phenomenon as Facebook the integration of both political economy and cultural studies is needed. Facebook can be seen as a miniature society but online. On the one hand, it reflects capitalism through Facebook being a corporation pursuing profit, but on the other hand, people log in there to do their own things, they communicate with friends, upload pictures, create groups and do many other activities which are significant for them and also for many others.

Facebook is not only a corporation but also a cultural form, and therefore, as I will outline in the next chapter, a new direction, which Douglas Kellner calls 'Critical Media/Cultural Studies', is needed, which will take account of both sides of Facebook.

## Chapter Three: Towards Critical Media/Cultural studies

### Facebook as a conduit of ideology of capitalism

Since the advancement of the Internet, many adherents of the techno-optimistic view claim that the Internet allows for more participation, self-expression and community building. The post-modernist view negates grand theories such as the Enlightenment and Marxism, to categorise the world more in linguistic and narrative constructs (Creeber 2009). Postmodernists celebrate new media emphasising more increased levels of self-reflexivity, pastiche, and intertextuality, rather than deep universal truths such as capitalism, and that media transmits ideologies which serve interests of dominant groups. However, this view ignores the fact that "the production and distribution of culture take place within a specific economic and political system, constituted by relations between the state, the economy, social institutions and practices, culture, and organizations like the media" (Kellner 2009, p. 9). This view negates the fact that we live in a capitalistic society, characterised by "the logic of commodification and capital accumulation" (Kellner 2009, p. 9).

Similarly, online social networks, such as Facebook, do not operate in a vacuum, but mirror, reflect and are based in a particular societal formation, and thus, socio-political factors should be taken into account when analysing such a phenomenon as Facebook.

Online social networks should not be seen as either neutral in regards to ideology, or from only a techno-optimistic point of view which sees them as empowering, but as tools which incorporate dominant ideology and exploitation. Ideology can be understood as "the mental framework – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the system of representation" and helps us to understand and analyse how "a particular set of ideas comes to dominate the social thinking of a historical bloc...and thus, helps to unite such a bloc from the inside, and maintain its dominance and leadership over society as a whole" (Hall 1996, pp. 26-27).

Critically inclined approaches to the media emphasise the fact that in describing any social phenomenon, the critique of exploitation and discrimination should be provided. Boltanski says the following about critical theory:

“But compared with sociological descriptions that seek to conform to the vulgate of neutrality, the specificity of critical theories is that they contain critical judgements on the social order which the analyst assumes responsibility for in her own name, thus abandoning any pretension to neutrality” (Boltanski 2011, p. 4.)

Critical theory sees online spaces as exploited by corporate players. For instance, Elmer (2004) calls the new information economy the ‘service-for-profile’ model, where users are promised a free service in exchange of their personal data. Pasquinelli (2009) calls the current economy the ‘collective intelligence of the web’; where users by using corporate search engines such as Google, provide data which allows analysing their behaviour and consumption patterns.

Thus, in analysing such a phenomenon as Facebook, the existing ideology of capitalism related to the information economy, where users believe that they get a service for free, while in fact they are being exploited by the site, should not be ignored. According to Boltanski and Chiapello (2007) ideology can be located in actual societal practices. The rise of the network capitalism led, on the one hand, to a more flexible workforce, where employees move freely between companies, but on the other hand, also created a new form of exploitation, where personal data is increasingly collected and analysed, and sold for commercial purposes.

Althusser (1971) described how ideology operated through ‘repressive state apparatus’, where the state exercises control through fear of repression via such actors as the police, the courts, the army and the prisons, and ‘ideological state apparatus’, encompassing such institutions as schools, church and the media which reproduce ideology in a more soft way. The Internet and online social networks can be seen as a new soft ideological apparatus which reproduces the ideology of the network capitalism.

From a critical perspective, capitalism is rooted in the idea that individuals have the right to unlimited appropriation, where the accumulation of resources leads to control of individuals by those with more power and resources, restricting the expansion of human capacities as a result. According to Macpherson, this is extractive power, which allows the exercise of "power over others, the ability to extract benefit from others" (Macpherson 1973, p. 42).

Users of Facebook and other online social networks have the illusion that they get a service for free, which permits them to connect with friends, create a profile, have fun, join groups, etc. However, in reality, users of Facebook become a 'prosumer commodity' (Fuchs 2009, p. 82). The time that users spend on the site, while chatting, browsing and looking at what friends are doing, makes profit for Facebook as a corporation, as the content produced on the site by its users is sold to advertisers. The activity of Facebook members is processed, surveyed and analysed, in order to establish consumption patterns and resell it to advertisers to improve personalised advertising which appears on the home screen once a user opens his or her Facebook page. "The category of the prosumer commodity does not signify a democratisation of the media towards participatory systems, but the total commodification of human creativity" (Fuchs 2009, p. 82). The ultimate ownership of all data produced by Facebook users belongs to Facebook itself, as it has the right to sell the content to advertisers, as specified in its privacy policy.

On the Internet it is actually easier to control what people are doing than in other media platforms, because of its visible nature and programs which can establish links between behaviour and consumption. In this respect, when users log in on Facebook they reinforce exploitation because they willingly provide data about themselves and participate in something which appears as fun and friendly, while in reality is a tool of surveillance. Forces of capitalism on such platforms as Facebook act in an invisible and 'soft' way, as users have the impression that they have something for free and are free to do on it what they want. But while, from the first glance, there is a potential for emancipation and grassroots socialism, in reality, users are even more controlled, "in the sense that individuals are activated to continuously participate in and integrate themselves into the structures of exploitation" (Fuchs 2009, p. 82). In this

respect, Web 2.0 tools, including Facebook, advance the current ideology of capitalism, by processing data of users and selling it to advertisers. It also reinforces the current ideology of capitalism by inciting users to certain patterns of behaviour. Profiles are made according to consumption tastes and users need to think about their consumption preferences while building a profile. All this leads to the fact that users, while thinking that they have fun, contribute in reality to the advancement of status-quo: capitalism. "Social networking has an ideological character: its networking advances capitalist individualization, accumulation and legitimization" (Fuchs 2009, p. 84). Individualization happens because while users on such networks as Facebook can create their own space (profile), in fact, there are limited possibilities where users can create things together. The whole concept is aimed at certain narcissism, where the user first of all is encouraged to think about the presentation of self. There is an assumption that individual creativity counts on the Internet, since it is visible, but in reality, however, individual expressions are lost in the power structure of the Internet itself. Voices of ordinary individuals are seldom heard or seriously addressed, while corporations and elites dominate the net.

The techno-optimistic view of the Internet in academia totally ignores its socio-political aspect. For instance, Jenkins (2006) argues that new media, or Web 2.0, with such sites as YouTube, Wikipedia, Facebook and MySpace has led to the increasing participation of ordinary people in media content and led him to proclaim that the audience is active and participatory in the age of Internet.

While the concept of creative and active audience is important, the research which focuses only on positive aspects of the Internet (that Fuchs describes as "celebratory cultural studies") (Fuchs, 2011, 2012), or limits itself only to the analysis of the network (such as in boyd & Ellison 2007) - often ignores the political economy of the Internet and the structure of the current society entirely, such as capitalism, power relations and surveillance.

Online social networks, including Facebook, should be regarded as reflecting the offline society. The problem with the techno-optimistic research, which dominated till recently the analysis of the phenomenon in academic world, lies

in the definition itself of online social networks. Boyd and Ellison give the following definition of online social networks such as Facebook:

“We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site” (boyd & Ellison 2007, p. 2).

There is, however, a problem with this definition. As Beer (2008) points out, this definition misses several important points about what can be defined as an online social network. This definition excludes the broader picture of what is commonly known as Web 2.0 culture, where people not only consume the content but also participate in its creation. His overview of Web 2.0 phenomenon seems important to me in order to broaden the definition provided by boyd and Ellison. As he and Burrows say, social online networks can be seen as networks that "are taking shared responsibility for the construction of vast accumulation of knowledge about themselves, each other, and the world. These are dynamic matrices of information through which people observe others, expand the network, make new 'friends', edit and update content, blog, remix, post, respond, share files, exhibit, tag and so on. This has been described as an online 'participatory culture'...where users are increasingly involved in creating web content as well as consuming it (Beer and Burrows 2007, p. 3).

The concept of 'participatory culture' is important as online social networks such as Facebook have become a part of everyday life for many people. People not only construct their profiles there, look for friends and traverse through the list of friends, but also actively participate in the construction of what is known as Facebook, and participate in many more activities than what is implied by the definition of boyd and Ellison. Facebook is much more than a simple online network where we connect with others. Facebook is a corporation which uses our data to sell to advertisers, Facebook is a place where we indeed connect with others, build our profiles, and either have fun or consider it a waste of time,

and Facebook can also play an important role in organizing public events as well as in the changing notion of privacy. Online social networks reflect, expand and teach us about our offline world. And this includes the changing face of capitalism, with more flexibility, at a first glance, but also expanding surveillance.

Beer also points out that in the analysis of such networks as Facebook the societal configuration should be taken into account, and this is primordial in understanding online social networks. It is, of course, very important to look at what users are doing on the network, but by ignoring the macro-context in which these networks are situated, one misses vital aspects of the usage: how the usage is conditioned by surveillance, the fact that Facebook is first of all a capitalistic corporation, and that users of Facebook can also be considered as the product of Facebook. All this is not only important in order to have a better understanding of Facebook as such, but also of its users, as the usage of Facebook is largely influenced by the society in which it is located.

In the analysis of Facebook, such aspects as capitalism, power relations, the role of the state, capital accumulation and surveillance society should be taken into consideration.

### **Critical studies**

Critical studies offer a more comprehensive analysis of the Internet and online social networks, as they focus on the totality. Critical studies see society as a terrain of domination and resistance and focus on "a critique of domination and of the ways that media culture engages in reproducing relationships of domination and oppression" (Kellner 1995, p. 4).

Critical media studies look at how to advance the democratic project, taking into account both the fact that media culture can act as a challenge for democracy but also as a boost for freedom and democratic project. "Media culture can be an impediment to democracy to the extent that it reproduces reactionary discourses, promoting racism, sexism, ageism, and other forms of prejudice. But media culture can also advance the interests of oppressed groups if it

attacks such things as racism or sexism, or at least undermines them with more positive representations of race and gender" (Kellner 1995, p. 4).

Thus, critical studies point to the dangers of social domination but also look at the possibilities of social change and progress. "Critical theory points to aspects of society and culture that should be challenged and changed, and thus attempts to inform and inspire political practice" (Kellner 1995, p. 25).

The tradition of critical studies comes in a large part from Frankfurt School, represented by such thinkers as Herbert Marcuse, Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Jürgen Habermas. They mostly expressed disdain for the media and judged that it was first of all a tool for propaganda. They experienced first-hand Nazi propaganda and then when they came to the United States, they discovered that American media was as propagandistic in promoting capitalism as were the Nazi and Soviet media. They conceived mass culture as instruments of ideology and domination. Mass culture was seen as a system of "social control, manipulation, and ideology that serves to reproduce the existing system of corporate capitalism" (Hammer and Kellner 2009, p. XXI). Media products were seen as "designed to keep the masses deluded in their oppression by offering a form of homogenized and standardized culture" (Creeber 2009, p. 13).

By many scholars of Frankfurt School audience was mostly seen as passive and gullible and capitalistic society was characterized as a commodity-producing society, where everything, including goods and services, art, media, politics and human life became commodities. The Frankfurt School's theorists coined the term 'culture industry' to signify 'the process of the industrialization of mass-produced culture and the commercial imperatives that drove the system' (Hammer and Kellner 2009, p. XXI).

They analysed all mass-mediated cultural artefacts within the context of industrial production, where cultural artefacts showed the same characteristics as other products of mass production, such as commodification, standardization and massification.

The most advanced critical research in the field of the Internet is proposed at this moment by Christian Fuchs. Christian Fuchs defines his research as critical media and communication theory which he defines as: "studies that focus ontologically on the analysis of media, communication, and culture in the context of domination, asymmetrical power relations, exploitation, oppression, and control by employing epistemologically all theoretical and/or empirical means necessary in order to contribute at the praxeological level to the establishment of a participatory, cooperative society" (Fuchs 2008, p. 20).

Fuchs offers a radical reconstruction of the classical model of the culture industries. His research is also largely influenced by Dallas Smythe and Marx. As Fuchs (2008) argues, if we consider Marx's work as the critique of all forms of domination and all dominative relations, then all critical research is inspired by Marx.

Fuchs is interested in both how the Internet shapes our society and also what kind of society is using the Internet. Thus, according to Fuchs, the Internet and the information society offer a new transcendental space, a promise of cooperative society. However, as he points out, the cooperative society or participatory democracy is not a 'fait accompli' because of an antagonism between cooperation and competition characterising capitalism. The idea of his thesis is that "information produces potentials that undermine competition but at the same time also produces new forms of domination and competition" (Fuchs 2008, p. 7).

Thus, Fuchs studies the Internet in the framework of capitalist society and looks at the antagonism between cooperation and competition and how it affects the use of the Internet and its democratic potential. He also looks at the surveillance society and how the Internet can be used for collecting data on its users.

Basing my theoretical foundations in a large part on Fuchs's writings, I propose to expand the field of critical theory in the Internet studies, by incorporating elements of popular culture and the analysis of media effects.

## The medium is the message

Marshall McLuhan was one of those who claimed that media themselves, and not the information they convey, do something to us. He is famous for two of his aphorisms, 'the medium is the message' and 'the content of a medium is always another medium' (McLuhan 1964, pp. 7-8).

By saying that 'the medium is the message' McLuhan emphasised the importance of the properties of the media. For McLuhan it is not the programme on the television which is important but how television would alter our everyday practices. For McLuhan the light bulb is the message as even if it has no content, it altered the environment and permitted to conduct activities previously difficult to realize. "For the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" (McLuhan 1964, p. 8). For McLuhan in analysing Facebook, posts and content of the network would be irrelevant, but what would be important are the ways Facebook changes human practices.

By saying 'the content of the medium is always another medium' McLuhan means that it is not what the medium communicates that is important but how it does so. "The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph" (McLuhan 1964, p. 8).

The main point of McLuhan was that media do something to us.

Scholars following the tradition of McLuhan showed enthusiasm and excitement towards the new media. Much of the work of McLuhan "anticipated the power of New Media to enhance an audience's interactivity with electronic information as a whole – transforming us all from 'voyeurs to participants" (Creeber 2009, p. 15).

In 2011 Marshall Poe, who is mainly a historian, published his book "A History of Communications: Media and Society from the Evolution of Speech to the Internet", and many of his arguments are based on the writings of McLuhan and Harold Allen Innis (1950, 1972), as emphasised in the introduction, and who argued that media could influence the way society is living. Innis said that media were 'pulled' into use by rising demand rather than by rising supply.

Demand would appear first and supply would follow. Innis proposed several rules of media on which Poe elaborates, by suggesting that the launch of a new technology is always incremental, meaning that there are certain conditions and demand in the society which 'pull' media into existence. Innis argued that the physical attributes of media 'pushed' societies and ideas into new directions. Poe takes this idea farther arguing that certain media attributes lead to network attributes which in turn lead to certain social practices and these social practices influence social values. He offers his 'Push theory of media effect' which looks at the evolution of media from speech to the Internet. Poe looks at speech, writing, print, audiovisual devices and the Internet and tries to explain what these different forms of media do to us. Like McLuhan, Poe focuses attention on the media itself, rather than on the information it conveys. For instance, Poe argues that the fact that the Internet is an accessible medium (at least in certain countries), leads to a diffuse network, where the control is dispersed throughout the network, which in turn leads to equalized social practices, where members can freely use the network and have an equal say in its development and use.

Most of the arguments of Poe in the tradition of McLuhan show an optimistic, empowering vision of the potential of the new media. I apply his arguments in this thesis to test his claims, and while I disagree with most of his statements about the media's effects, as we will see later, some properties of new technologies do indeed lead to certain changes in the society, like for instance, our approach to privacy, or how we view our identity.

For instance, danah boyd, a prominent researcher in the field of online social networks, regards online social networks, including Facebook as 'networked publics' (2010). Networked publics, according to boyd, are publics that are shaped by networked technologies. They are both the space which is constructed through networked technologies and "an imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology and practice" (boyd 2010, p. 1). Networked publics have the same properties as other types of publics - they allow people to gather for different purposes, such as social, cultural and civic and they help people to connect and stay in touch with people "a world beyond their close friends and family" (boyd 2010, p. 1). Even if

networked publics have much in common with other types of publics, they, nevertheless have distinct features as a result of technology structures and have different dynamics than other types of publics. The distinct features of networked publics do not dictate participants' behaviour, but they do configure the environment in a way that shapes participants' engagement.

Boyd distinguishes four affordances that characterize online social networks, such as persistence (online expressions are automatically recorded and archived), replicability (the content can be duplicated), scalability (there is big potential for the visibility of content) and searchability (content in networked publics can be found through search). Apart from the four affordances, Boyd also distinguishes three dynamics of online social networks: 1) invisible audiences (when a person is on a social network, not all audiences are visible and they are not necessary co-present), 2) collapsed contexts (because of the lack of spatial, social and temporal boundaries it is difficult to maintain distinct social contexts), and 3) the blurring of public and private (because of the lack of control over context, it is difficult to maintain distinction between public and private) (Boyd 2010).

Boyd mainly studied young people and concludes that the changes brought by online social networks - are really deep. Young people organize events via Facebook or MySpace, play with their identities, chat, learn to know more about their friends and use it as a new hang-out place.

Her research and especially the distinction of four affordances and three dynamics of online social networks are very important for the understanding of some of privacy issues on Facebook and the way the users conduct themselves on the network.

Marshall Poe goes further than Boyd and argues that all mediums have properties which can influence the way the society is living.

Marshall Poe in his analysis of media expands the point of McLuhan and looks at how media impacts our society and proposes a theory of media effects. Although some aspects of Poe's theorising can be shown to lack validity (like his claim that an open network will lead to equal social practices, or increased

democracy) his theory can serve as a basis for the analysis of Facebook and its effects on our society and his points serve mostly for organizational purposes to look at such aspects within Facebook as power, privacy, surveillance, friendships, community, etc.

### **Push Theory of media effects**

Poe looks at the media from the point of the view of the user and asks what kind of media attributes would make it handy. Innis said that media attributes directly affected what he called 'civilizations', but Marshall Poe uses the term 'network'. According to him, all communication media allow people to communicate with each other, thus leading to networks. When people are linked to each other through a medium, a network appears, and as Poe explains: "Media may or may not do a lot of things..., but there is no doubt that they directly and necessarily create networks" (Poe 2011, p. 14). According to Poe, different kinds of media create different kinds of networks. For instance, unaided speech has a short range and thus, the effective network created within is small. Similarly, television has a long reach and the effective network built within television signals is large. Media with short range create geographically concentrated networks, while media with long range create geographically large networks.

Poe proposes eight media attributes, which lead to network attributes and in turn, create certain social practices and values. I integrate his arguments into the thesis to argue that while new media technologies can influence certain social practices, there is dialectic between technology and the way the society is organised.

The eight media attributes of Poe are the following:

*Accessibility*: the availability of a medium itself and the cost of getting and using the medium. Depending on the accessibility of the medium, Poe argues, the network will either be concentrated or diffused. Concentrated networks are those where the control of the medium is in the hands of a relative few, while diffuse networks are those where the control is dispersed throughout the network. Internet, according to Poe is a diffuse network, with equalised social practices.

*Privacy*: to what extent can users hide their identity and the content of messages in a medium determines whether the network will be segmented or connected. Segmented networks are those where users and the exchanged data can be hidden from others, connected networks are those where users and the data cannot be hidden. According to Poe, the Internet is a private network, on which you can decide who you are and have multiple identities simultaneously.

*Fidelity*: to what degree are data in a medium coded? Or how hard is it to decode (recognise) a message in the medium? As Poe argues, depending on the cost of sending messages relative to fidelity in a medium, the network will either be iconic or symbolic. An iconic medium is where messages are easily decoded or recognised, symbolic networks are those where messages have to be manually decoded. Poe argues that the higher the fidelity of a medium, the more iconic its network will be, and the more iconic a network, the more social practices in it will be sensualized. The Internet, according to Poe is a dual network, with low-fidelity channel carrying speech, writing and print, and a high-fidelity channel, carrying audio-visual messages. However, Poe thinks that the high-fidelity channel dominates on Internet (as people prefer sounds and images), with the most pronounced effect being the sensualisation of social practices.

*Volume*: the cost of sending messages in a medium relative to size and the quantity in which data can be transmitted in a medium. Depending on the cost of transmitting messages relative to size in a medium, the network will be either constrained or unconstrained. Unconstrained networks are those where a large amount of data can be exchanged, constrained networks are those where only a small amount of data can be exchanged. Poe argues that the higher the volume of a medium, the less constrained its network will be, leading to hedonized and value-entertainment practices. The Internet, as Poe says, has an extraordinary volume, and thus, people use it mostly for pleasure.

*Velocity*: what is the cost of sending messages in a medium relative to speed? Depending on the cost of exchanging messages relative to speed in a medium the network will be either dialogic or monologic. Dialogic networks are those

where many people can exchange messages quickly, monologic networks are those where it is difficult to exchange messages. The Internet, according to Poe, is a dialogic network, and this leads to more democratized social practices.

*Range*: what is the cost of sending messages in a medium relative to distance? Depending on the cost of transmitting messages relative distance and reach in a medium, the network will either be extensive or intensive. Extensive networks are those where messages can be exchanged over large areas and among a large amount of people, intensive networks are those where messages are exchanged over a small area and among a relative few. The Internet, Poe says, is an extensive network where we can find diversified social practices and pluralism as an ideology.

*Persistence*: the duration over which data can be preserved in a medium. Depending on the cost of preserving messages relative to time in a medium, the network will be either additive or substitutive. Additive networks are those where messages accumulate, substitutive networks are those where new messages replace the old. The Internet, according to Poe is a very persistent medium, where information can be copied and stored easily.

*Searchability*: the efficiency with which data can be found in a medium. Depending on the cost of finding messages in a medium, the network will be either mapped or unmapped. Mapped networks are those where it is easy to search, find and retrieve messages, while unmapped networks are those where it is difficult to search and find messages. Poe says that the Internet is a very searchable medium, and this leads to increased individualism and autonomy, as mapping “facilitates independent discovery” (Poe 2011, p. 22).

As outlined in the introduction, Poe’s arguments can be classed as being techno-deterministic. While some of the properties of a medium can in fact trigger some social changes, as we will see in the section of analysis and interpretation, every medium is based first of all in a particular societal aspect. Facebook might be a very accessible medium, but while it appears at a first glance that users have a lot of power within the network, in reality, this is far

from being true, as I will discuss in detail in the section of analysis and interpretation. Analysing Facebook without taking the context of capitalism into account will lead to only a limited view of the phenomenon. It is true that certain properties of such a network as Facebook (but also the Internet in general) such as its persistent character lead and have led to certain changes as to how we approach our privacy. But the analysis of privacy without the surveillance which is the growing aspect of 'informational capitalism' (Fuchs 2011, 2012) will miss the exploitative aspect of the Internet.

Therefore, while integrating and testing the arguments of Poe in the thesis, and building the analysis around his eight network attributes, it is crucial to look at such a phenomenon as Facebook, by using critical media/cultural studies, which incorporate the three elements, discussed already: the societal aspect, in which the phenomenon is based, the properties of the network, and finally, the role of the user.

#### **The user within Facebook and popular culture**

Another point that should be taken into account in the analysis of such phenomenon as the Internet and online social networks is the perspective of the user. By focusing entirely on the problems of capitalism, we risk missing the aspect of 'joy' within the Internet and the concept of popular culture. As Dwayne Winseck in his discussion with Christian Fuchs argues: "We need to focus more on textured interplay between macro and micro level analysis, theoretico-deductive approaches versus inductive but still theory-grounded empirical observation" (Fuchs and Winseck 2011, p. 259).

Giddens's points about how researchers should approach sociology seem especially important in analysing such phenomenon as the Internet and Facebook. In 'New Rules of Sociological Method' (1976) he stressed the importance of focusing both on the macro and micro aspects of the object of analysis, on both the structure and the agency. He called it 'duality of structure', writing that the connection between structure and action is a fundamental element of social theory, that structure and agency are a duality which have to be analysed together. People make society, but at the same time their actions

are influenced by the structure of a society, and both have to be taken into account. Giddens elaborated this point further in his theory of structuration (1984), where he argued that a study of any social phenomenon should be based on the analysis of both structure and agents. Neither solely macro nor micro-focussed approaches are sufficient. In the 'duality of structure' agents and structure mutually influence social systems.

In the analysis of Facebook if we focus only on the user and on the way people use the medium, we can miss entirely how their usage is conditioned by the capitalistic structure of the medium, however, if we focus only on the structure of Facebook, we can miss the human element in the medium. After all it is the people who make Facebook and who use it. As Dwayne Winseck argues in his discussion with Christian Fuchs (2011), by reducing media and communication to instruments of domination there is a danger to overlook the links between communication and media and pleasure and joy. For instance, he argues that if we look at Google as simply a corporation, pursuing only capitalistic interests, we can overlook its positive aspects, such as its tools for searching and storing, boost for research and innovation, etc.

There needs to be a dialectic between studies of exploitation and joy. By focusing only on the exploitative aspect, we can totally forego the aspect of popular culture, which John Fiske defines as "the art of making do with what the system provides" (Fiske 1989, p. 25). It is the culture which is made by people and is "the interface between the products of the culture industries and everyday life" (Fiske 1989, p. 25).

By focussing also on the element of popular culture, while analysing Facebook does not necessarily mean that it becomes the celebratory cultural studies. As Fiske argues:

"The relationship between popular culture and the forces of commerce and profit is highly problematic...At the simplest level, this is an example of a user not simply consuming a commodity but reworking it, treating it not as a completed object to be accepted passively, but as a cultural resource to be used. A number of important theoretical issues underlie the differences between a user of a cultural resource and a consumer of a commodity (which are not different activities, but different ways of theorizing, and therefore of understanding, the same activity)" (Fiske 1989, p. 11).

In other words, in the case of Facebook, it is important to look at both how the user is 'exploited' by Facebook, by underlining the capitalistic structure of Facebook but also at how the user makes Facebook 'his own', reworks it and has fun with it. As we will see later in the analysis, users of Facebook reflect about what Facebook represents, question its structure, or privacy policy. Most users actively engage with Facebook, and sometimes even try to sabotage its functioning. But more than often, people simply have fun on Facebook, and by ignoring this aspect, we can miss the analysis of an online social network's potential.

Earlier it was argued that the Internet and online social networks are conduit of the existing ideology of capitalism. However, while Facebook can be seen as supporting the current structure of 'informational capitalism' and as exploiting its users, there is also a strong element of popular culture present on the network. One cannot reduce the analysis of such a phenomenon as Facebook only to political economy, as it can miss the potential the network offers and also its role in the lives of people. When people log in to Facebook they do not think of it as something which exploits them (which might be a problem!), but as something, which in the lives of many, plays a very important role. As Kellner argues: "Some political economy analyses reduce the meanings and effects of texts to rather circumscribed and reductive ideological functions, arguing that media culture merely reflects the ideology of the ruling economic elite that controls the culture industry and is nothing more than a vehicle for the dominant ideology." However, as Kellner continues: "in order to fully grasp the nature and effects of media culture, one should see contemporary society and culture as contested terrains and media and cultural forms as spaces in which particular battles over gender, race, sexuality, political ideology, and values are fought." (Kellner 2009, p. 11) Facebook is first of all a corporation pursuing profit, but it is also nothing without its users, who while providing data for the network, have fun there, connect with friends, derive pleasure from reading status updates, and learn something about themselves through the profile updating. As the reader will see later, the pleasure, often guilty pleasure, which users derive from using the network, is also a disputable notion under capitalism. This pleasure can be seen as controlled pleasure, as Facebook can monitor what users are doing on the

network, but it is also an escape for its users and a tool of creativity on some occasions. Facebook also reflects other aspects of the society such as the rise of the celebrity culture, changing notion of the community and how we approach our identity and friendship. All these things are important to take into account as they mirror the 'social aspect' of the network.

Earlier it was pointed out that scholars of the political economy and cultural studies have a common history. They both started with looking at how cultural artefacts promote the current ideology, however, what was important in the beginning of cultural studies, was the study of resistance that people engaged in. For instance, British cultural studies challenged the fact that the audience of cultural forms is passive, advocating the notion of an active audience that creates its own meanings. They also argued that the economic aspect of capitalism cannot provide all the answers about a particular cultural context, that also thoughts of people and their actions need to be analysed. While media tries to integrate us into the dominant status-quo, there is always a resistance and creativity of people using it. Ideology is a contested terrain. It is "a strategy of domination and a terrain of struggle" (Fiske 1996, p.213). Stuart Hall described ideology as 'opened up', or 'organic', meaning that ideology "is one arising from the shared material conditions of various formations of the people, can act to unify them and construct for them something approaching a class identity, a class consciousness...unifies by providing forms of intelligibility which explain the collective situation of different social groups: an organic ideology, then, empowers the subordinate" (Hall 1996, p. 219). We live under capitalism where we are constantly integrated into the familiar patterns of control, domination and increasingly, surveillance. However, also under these conditions, people find a way to resist and build their own things. The creativity of people on Facebook can be seen as a form of resistance, and that no cultural form can be truly contained.

This is similar to the argument of Foucault who disagreed with traditional definitions of ideology and saw the social reality as the assembly of several parallel 'truths' and where a particular 'discourse' about a phenomenon was not only about the exercise of control but also allowed for the emergence of resistance. The term 'discourse' applied by Foucault was different from

discourse as understood within linguistic discipline (where it represents how the spoken word is presented in interactions and conversations) and established what was possible to know and do in the social world about a particular social phenomenon. Thus, his concept of power, for instance, is very different from the traditional concepts which see power as coercive. Power, as any other social phenomenon according to Foucault, is a discourse, and thus, cannot be only possessed or imposed in a top down manner, but also can be emancipatory and diffuse.

It is interesting to see how the concept of power changed in the works of Foucault. In his early works, he saw power as embedded in institutions themselves. His concept of discipline, however, which he saw as 'anatomy of power', a modality of its exercise, operated on a more abstract level, and fabricated the subject (Foucault 1977). The subject was found through three disciplinary means such as the observation, the normalizing judgement and the examination. The examination can be found in Foucault's description of Bentham's Panopticon, a circular building, where the one standing in the centre could observe in an unlimited way the others while not being seen himself. This ensured the functioning of power as subjects, knowing that they are observed, adhered to a certain pattern of behaviour. It did not matter whether the guard was observing the subjects at any particular moment, the mere fact that they could be observed ensured that discipline was imposed from within. Under normalizing judgement Foucault meant the differentiation of individuals from one another, where certain rules had to be observed to ensure certain conformity. And the examination refers to the individualisation of the subject who knows that he is observed and starts observing himself the others, and thus, reinforcing the norms which are available within a discourse. From this perspective, Foucault saw discipline and surveillance as inherently coercive and giving little freedom to people. However, in his later works, such as 'The Subject and Power' Foucault saw power only when it is put into action and as diffuse, thus, allowing the possibility to resist and as something which can become productive (Foucault 1982). Power as a discourse allowed for other 'truths' to be made, and this, could potentially, create a discourse of resistance, which would create another form of power. Power then is not something which causes social

change, but a means through which social change can be enabled. Power, according to Foucault, is not possessed, but exercised. And where there is power, there is also resistance. Foucault showed that power could also be deployed on a micro-level, like was the case in 1968 when students had the capacity to influence the French government through strikes and street protests. Power, Foucault argued, is linked to the type of dominant knowledge at any given time and the types of discourses used. For instance, the invisible power of surveillance, which is increasingly present nowadays, can be explained by Western governments' actions after September 11<sup>th</sup> to justify the security of its citizens. There is a discourse of a 'fight against terrorism' which is currently applied by some Western governments. As a result the surveillance becomes quickly a norm and people seldom question its motives. However, if enough people started to question it, then another 'truth' about surveillance could emerge, which would question its deployment in certain cases, like for instance, Facebook, but also supermarkets, etc. I will discuss more the normalization of surveillance in the chapter on power.

Facebook, as will be seen later, can be regarded as a form of Panopticon, where users are observed but also observe each other to ensure 'the normalization.' Users are known to report each other if they judge that a certain status update or a profile 'violate' what is considered to be normal or is considered to be offensive. On the other hand, while there is a surveillance which is present on Facebook, it also triggers a certain discourse among the users once they know about it. Facebook, while being a tool of capitalism, could also become a tool where users could start a resistance to the status quo. As the reader will see later in the thesis, very few people know about alternative non-profit online social networks. But once they learn about them, they do become interested. Facebook, ironically, could be a platform where the knowledge about alternative platforms could become available.

Therefore, it is important to analyse forms of creativity and presence of popular culture within the network as well. Users are exploited and surveyed, but they also are capable of creating forms of resistance, popular art and self-expression. It could be argued that most utterances of self-expression on

Facebook can be regarded as hardly revolutionary, but some of them show that users are capable of self-reflection and reflect about the culture around them.

The following section examines Facebook as a case study demonstrating these contradictory aspects of the site by analysing its macro and micro aspects and by also looking at the possible effects of Facebook on the society.

## Chapter Four: Facebook as a Case Study

This study employs a qualitative method to build on critical media/ cultural studies (Kellner 2009). As outlined in the introduction, the aim of critical media/cultural studies is to look at the phenomenon under question (in this case Facebook) by analysing the interconnections between the social, political, economic and cultural aspects of media culture. In this respect, this research is a theoretical, descriptive study, where critical theory is combined with accounts of users of Facebook to achieve a better understanding of such a phenomenon as Facebook. “For critical theory there is a constant interaction between theory and facts and the theorist seeks to recognise the relationship between the constitution of their propositions and the social context in which they find themselves” (May 2001, p. 39).

One of the most effective tools to build on critical media/cultural studies are Critical Studies of Media and Information of Christian Fuchs (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) on which I elaborate by introducing a dimension of popular culture and the user’s point of view (of Facebook) to reflect on the dialectic under capitalism between exploitation and joy. One of the underlying goals of this study, as mentioned earlier is an attempt at reconciliation between Critical Political Economy and Critical Cultural Studies or rather to go back to the roots of both movements since, as already explained, the current shift where cultural studies mainly focus on language and gender and critical political economy on the macro-context is difficult to overcome.

To go back to the roots’ means that in the analysis of a media phenomenon one needs to take account of both the macro-context (political, social and economic dimensions) and micro-context (cultural and popular aspects), while being aware of the properties of a technology as such. As Babe mentions it in his book on cultural studies and political economy, “in a very real sense, the Frankfurt School birthed both of these modes of critical media analysis” (Babe 2010, p. 17). Thus, Babe attributes the origins of both critical political economy and critical cultural studies to Theodor Adorno, who coined the term ‘the culture

industry' and analysed how culture was produced in masses and for a mass mainly in order to make profit. He was one of the first to analyse the domination and exploitation on a cultural level within capitalistic societies and how this reflected the broader aspect of political and economic power (Horkheimer and Adorno 1987). Adorno was very much influenced by the works of Karl Marx, but instead of focussing on the class struggle he devoted his attention to elite-mass conflict.

At the same time Adorno didn't see the public as merely passive, but capable to see through propaganda and deception, and he attributed a great attention to the dialectics of the culture industry. On the one hand, people produce art in order to experience pleasure, but on the other hand, this art is then transformed into a mass product, whose main aim becomes profit.

Works of Christian Fuchs also employ a dialectical methodology, where the potential for resistance that the Internet provides is combined with the analysis of the capitalistic mode of production, based on exploitation of labour force.

"The rise of transnational informational capitalism is neither only a subjective, not only an objective transformation, but is based on a subject-object dialectic" (Fuchs 2012, p. 6). What he means is that the technology doesn't operate in a vacuum, but is situated in a particular socio-economic and political context and 'is a force that shapes and is shaped by agency' (Fuchs 2012, p. 7).

In order to analyse the impact that a technology might have in the society (such as Facebook) one indeed needs a dialectical methodology, to analyse, on the one hand, a context in which the technology is situated, and, on the other hand, how it is used by ordinary people in their daily lives. The Internet, based on its very qualities and following the arguments of Poe, which I am going to use in this study, has the potential for increased participation and democratisation.

However, these qualities are nothing if the Internet is dominated by forces which are not interested in the increased participation or exploit the medium solely for profit and propaganda. Thus, one needs to employ a critical analysis, such as it was presented in the works of the thinkers of Frankfurt School, to study media culture.

Critical theory doesn't focus only on the analysis of exploitation and domination, but also offers discourse for improvement. Without, for instance, an insight as to how capitalism influences the dynamics in the contemporary society, one won't be able to provide a meaningful discussion about daily lives of people living under it, as the economic and political structure determines to a great extent our lives. People might create art, use the Internet for political discussions, etc, but if the corporate elite is only interested in seeing the online space as a profit, then it becomes very hard to make out of art something more meaningful than a simple piece for sale. At the same time, people do leave their lives to their best ability, and with focussing only on how capitalism exploits us, we can miss an important element of resistance to it and also the element of joy and pleasure that people experience in their lives, even if it can be argued that by enjoying manifestations of capitalism we also reinforce it.

The Internet is a controversial, dynamic and complex system, as is the society in which it was invented. Its creation shows the potential of human talent and capability. However, how the Internet operates at this moment, with it being dominated by big corporations, shows that while the potential is there, it can be either suppressed or encouraged for a greater use, depending on the political and economic powers in place. Therefore, one needs to look at different aspects in an analysis of a medium such as Facebook to understand its dynamics and whether it does have the potential for a greater use.

In this respect, Facebook is a case study to situate the online social network in a broader socio-political context, while also reflecting on its usage by people in their daily lives. The aim of the study is to build on critical media/cultural studies in order to understand how a particular media form is influenced by a macro-context and is also manifested on a more 'mundane' level of the everyday life. Looking at Facebook in this way can be described as a case study, where one of the main goals is to reflect on the socio-political context and its interaction with a popular form such as a widely used online social network so that we can reach a better grasp of cultural and social changes taking place around us since the advancement of the use of some new technologies. Facebook is studied in depth as a cultural and social phenomenon, but it also sheds an additional light into the functioning of 'informational capitalism' (Fuchs 2012, 2013). How do

these technologies affect us, how do they mirror the society, and how do people interact with them, - all these questions are ever more important with the crisis of capitalism in the past years. Thus, Facebook in this instance is analysed to understand more social, political and cultural changes that we have experienced since the rise of 'informational capitalism'.

The aim of a case is to "focus on enquiry around an instance in action" (Adelman et al. 1980, p. 49). Facebook is an instance in action, situated in the current context of 'soft capitalism' and where people log in on a daily basis, sometimes several times a day, to conduct a range of activities. These activities can be seen as trivial, but analysed within a socio-political context, they can teach us about many different things, such as friendship, power relations in 'informational capitalism', identity, the rise of the celebrity culture, etc. Case studies give voice to real people, and 'instances in action' are useful to create context for theoretical discourse. By focussing both on the broader context of Facebook and its usage by ordinary people, my aim is to contribute to the knowledge of critical/cultural studies and to reach a better understanding of the role a new technology can play in our lives.

Traditionally, the goal of cultural studies was "the investigation of cultural processes in their contextual link to power relations", and a comprehensive concept of culture included both "cultural texts and experience and practices." (Winter 2004, p. 119). Facebook serves as an example to analyse the relations of power within the current context of capitalism as well as the ordinary experience of the user. People construct their own meanings about Facebook, from which a pattern of different cultural functions of Facebook can be established, and which should bring a better understanding of the current society as a whole. While this is a case study of Facebook, it does not mean that some insights into other cultural manifestations, such as the increasing use of the Internet are not possible. 'Narratives' of Facebook are considered in the broader social and political context, and while the aim is to deepen understanding of the phenomenon under study (Facebook), some parallels with other cultural forms can be drawn on the basis of this study.

On a more concrete level, as outlined in the introduction, I focus on three interrelated themes in the analysis of Facebook: its role as a corporation and to what extent Facebook reflects broader socio-political context, its role in the ordinary lives of people and how it affects us in terms of culture and daily activities, and how the properties of the network influence the changes in the society or not. I am going to explain how I answer these questions in my study by using a dialectical methodology.

### **Facebook as a cultural context and a cultural form**

Christine Hine distinguishes between looking at the Internet as cultural context and as a cultural tool (Hine 2005). Her main argument is that the Internet reflects our offline world but is also used by people for various reasons.

Facebook, being situated in a capitalistic society, reflects the tendencies which have taken place in the Post-Fordism economy, such as the growing use of the 'prosumer commodity' and the juxtaposition between the gift and the commodity economy, at which I will look in detail in the chapter on power. Users believe that they get a service for free, while in fact they become a 'labour pool' used for commercial reasons. Capitalism can be defined as "an antagonistic social formation that is based on divisions into social groups that compete for economic (property: money, commodities), political (power: social relationships, origin), and cultural capital (definition capacities, qualifications, education, knowledge)..." (Fuchs 2008, p. 90). This class structure leads to social struggles which result in accumulating capital in the hands of some groups at the expense of others. Facebook is situated in this context (capitalism) and therefore, can tell us a few things about how economic, political and cultural capital is distributed in the current society. By employing critical theory I will try to answer the question as to what role Facebook plays as a corporation and reflects in this way a broader socio-economic and political context. On an ontological level this study is conducted through 'reconstructing critical political economy', where I regard capitalism as the main force which shapes our economic, social and political context, but where people still try to resist the current status quo through art. It can also be called materialistic ontology – "Critical theory is materialistic in the sense that it addresses phenomena and problems not in terms of absolute ideas and predetermined societal

developments, but in terms of resource distribution and social struggles” (Fuchs and Sandoval 2008, p. 114). This analysis looks at the phenomenon under study by taking account of an economic and political context in which it is based, “...while capitalism does not require any particular superstructure, it does require that the superstructure in place be consistent with the capitalist form of production” (Babe 2009, p. 103). We live in a capitalistic society, and ignoring how the society is influenced by the capitalistic mode of production risks having an insufficient or uncritical analysis. In the recent years the rapid rise of new technologies led some to proclaim that we live in a totally different society. However, these changes are just a part of ‘informational capitalism’ (Fuchs 2012, 2013), which is still based on the exploitation. Capitalism operates through its own constant transformation. Therefore, “informational capitalism is a tendency in the development of the productive forces, not a society” (Fuchs 2012, p. 12). There are many different aspects of capitalism operating simultaneously at the same time, such as financial, oil, gold and informational, but the main economic umbrella is still based on the exploitation of the labour force. However, it is important to see the ‘clever’ and sophisticated way with which the informational capitalism operates, where the Internet companies offer a service for free while exploiting the users which join their sites, through collection of data and selling it to advertisers. Facebook, used as a case study can tell us how the new informational capitalism functions in this particular instance (Facebook). By using critical media/cultural studies I am going to look at such questions as how power operates on online social network, its potential for democratisation and how it reflects the society of surveillance. All this can be analysed and discussed only once aware of a broader macro-context. In this respect, the analysis of Facebook as corporation is done largely on a theoretical level, by also using empirical data from my own ethnographic research and by looking at how Facebook evolved as a public company, using mostly secondary data, derived from the financial statements of the company, but also newspaper articles, blogs, and websites.

At the same time Facebook is also a cultural form. And that is why my ontology is ‘reconstructing critical political economy’. A cultural form includes different forms of media culture and provides role and gender models, fashion tips,

images of life-style, icons of personality, patterns of proper and improper behaviour, moral messages and ideological conditioning. Cultural forms provide patterns of practices which help people to integrate into the established society (Durham and Kellner 2001). Facebook, as I will discuss in the section of analysis and interpretation, influences how we view friendship and community, how we build and present our identity and how we approach privacy in the age of growing Internet usage. Facebook is also a part of everyday life for many people. Using Facebook as an example, we can ask a question as to how new technologies affect our lives.

On an epistemological level I employ dialectical realism (Fuchs and Sandoval 2008). Reality is regarded as complex and dynamic, and "is based on the insight that reality should be conceived as having neither only opportunities not only risks, but contradictory tendencies that pose both positive and negative potentials at the same time that are realised or suppressed by human social practice" (Fuchs and Sandoval 2008, p. 113-114). By analysing Facebook both within its macro and micro contexts I want to show the dialectic which happens with any cultural form under capitalism. By using empirical data, derived from my interviews, I try to show that users derive numerous benefits from logging in Facebook. Facebook as a new medium also influences important tendencies in our society in general, such as how we behave in a semi-public space (the Internet), how we rethink the community, friendship and identity. Facebook is exploiting its users by using their data, but at the same time it is an important tool in the daily lives of people, many of whom cannot see their lives without Facebook.

And here lies the contradiction of the current system (capitalism). Humans employ creativity on a daily basis, and many 'useful' and 'fun' tools and cultural forms are invented constantly. However, under the logic of accumulation which is the characteristic of capitalism, these forms and tools are channelled into profit and finally, exploitation. Through this study, I want to show the contradiction of 'informational' capitalism. Facebook as a tool has many properties and characteristics which can provide greater accessibility, democratic potential, equality and diversity, but by employing critical theory, one

can conclude that these qualities can be suppressed by the existing socio-economic and political context.

### **Data Collection**

To illustrate the view of the user I mostly employed ethnography, which was underpinned by critical theory. Ethnography included semi-structured face-to-face interviews, observation of public groups on Facebook, and self-reflexivity, since while doing this research I have been an active user of Facebook myself.

I take a framework of Nancy Baym (2006) as an indication for standards of qualitative research. She applies these standards for a research based on Internet phenomenon, but her framework can be taken in all qualitative research settings. A researcher doing qualitative research should make arguments and counter-arguments, be open to the possibility that research questions might change during the course of data collection, be reflexive, use multiple strategies for the collection of data, and base the arguments around six main requirements. Arguments should be grounded in theory and data, the researcher should show rigour in data collection and analysis, use multiple strategies to collect data, take into account the perspectives of participants, demonstrate awareness and reflexivity towards the research process, and take into account interconnections and links between internet and the life world within which it is situated. Thus, Baym finds it very important to have face-to-face interviews with participants when discussing an online phenomenon (Baym 2006).

Thus, following the guidelines of Baym, my research questions have changed during the collection of data. While in the beginning when I started my interviews my main emphasis was on the link between offline and online worlds, some themes which emerged during the interviews led me to reconsider my research questions. Also, as mentioned already, my own involvement with Facebook influenced this research as well. When I applied to do a PhD I was interested in Facebook more as a popular form, since the network played at that time a significant part in my life. I found it fascinating that while living in Brussels I could see on a daily basis what my friends in Amsterdam and Moscow were

doing. I could see enormous benefits in having such a network in my daily life and was also playing with and thus, rediscovering my identity through my involvement on Facebook. Therefore, my initial research proposal was based on studying impression management on Facebook. However, starting from my first interview the focus of my research started to shift (the transcript and analysis of the first interview are provided in the appendices). The interviewee was mentioning how Facebook reflected what was happening in our society in general, like acceleration of our daily lives and the fact that we are used to get things quickly twenty-four hours a day. This led me to look at Facebook in a broader context, with a question, as to what extent does Facebook reflect general tendencies in our society? But this question, in turn, led me to ask the question such as: in which society are we living? This influenced me to look into critical theory and to look at Facebook within a broader socio-political context. My questions for interview changed as well, and interviews would in some instances become illustrative to reflect on a theoretical question and in some instances, they highlighted the issue, such as, for instance, the question of privacy and Facebook (Silverman 2005, pp. 48-90).

My main data comes from 17 semi-structured face-to-face interviews and 5 online interviews with users of Facebook (a list of participants under pseudonyms is provided in the appendices). Interviews were treated as giving access to experiences and helped to examine 'problems' of Facebook in the daily lives of people which in turn contributed to the main theoretical discussion which is critical media/cultural studies. The basis of critical social research is "the idea that knowledge is structured by existing sets of social relations. The aim of a critical methodology is to provide knowledge which engages the prevailing social structures" (Harvey 1990, p. 2). Thus, in order to analyse Facebook, the capitalistic structure of Facebook is analysed and this, in turn, serves to analyse power relations within Facebook and how it reflects the existing social structures. Critique is an integral part of critical social research, where knowledge becomes a critique itself. Knowledge is seen as a dynamic process in critical theory and not as a static entity. "A critical research process involves more than merely appending critique to an accumulation of 'fact' or 'theory' gathered via some mechanical process, rather it denies the (literally)

objective status of knowledge and concerns itself with the processual nature of knowledge" (Harvey 1990, p. 3). Knowledge is a process used in order to understand better the world, and in this study Facebook is used as an example to get a better understanding of what is happening in the society today. The process of knowledge is underpinned in this study by interviews, since a theoretical analysis "that fails to engage the material world through empirical material is itself limited...it fails to bridge the gap between theory and practice" (Harvey 1990, p. 7). Empirical analysis together with theoretical analysis is essential for "a dialectical analysis of inner connections" (Harvey, p. 7). Thus, interviews as well as observation of some participants who gave me their permission, allowed me to include the analysis of Facebook as a form of popular culture. Facebook, as a corporation, whose main drive is profit reflects the configuration of the current society, which is capitalism, but it does not mean that people do not derive some benefits from using it.

For recruiting my participants, a snowball technique was used, which is an established practice in qualitative settings (Orgad 2005). As a result I ended with quite a few PhD students, and considering also the relatively small sample of my interviews, this could be seen as making generalisations impossible. However, the aim of the research was not to reach an absolute truth, but to attempt at a better understanding of what is Facebook. Underpinned by theoretical discussion based on critical media/cultural studies, the study gives a dialectical analysis of Facebook, with some new insights into the questions of power within informational capitalism, surveillance society, and the role of the user on online social networks.

The fact that many of my participants were PhD students influenced some conclusions reached in this thesis. It emerged from my interviews that students and post-graduate students know more what Facebook represents than perhaps other segments of population. Students are taught to reflect and analyse the world around it and most of my participants were aware of the privacy policy of Facebook and the fact that Facebook sells their data. If anything it shows that students should be taught more on this account and encouraged to react and resist the status-quo.

The aim of the interviews was to see what role Facebook plays in the lives of people who use it. The idea was to see what people think of Facebook, how they react to Facebook in general and how it reflects broader changes taking place in contemporary society. Do people feel the effect of Facebook? Do they find it important? How do they use it and why? And how do they place it in terms of acceleration of our daily lives in general? My interviews were semi-structured interviews, conducted more "as a conversation" (Skinner 2012, p. 8). "This type of interview is themed and seeks to understand the actor's understanding of his or her own life world, his or her interpretations, meanings and narrations" (Skinner 2012, p. 9). Instead of using coding, I would first make an analysis of an interview before proceeding to the next one to see which themes would emerge and analyse it in the context of critical media/cultural studies.

Interview is regarded not only as a method but also as an important part of the analysis itself. It would "be a mistake to treat the interview – or any information-gathering technique – as simply a research procedure. The interview is part and parcel of our society and culture. It is not just a way of obtaining information about who and what we are; it is now an integral, constitutive feature of our everyday lives" (Gubrium and Holstein 2003, p. 29).

David Silverman went as far as to say that 'perhaps we all live in what might be called an 'interview society', in which interviews seem central to making sense of our lives" (Silverman 1987, p. 248).

The aim of the interviews was to get the meanings, opinions and perceptions regarding Facebook and everyday life. We can observe certain things online, but what does happen offline?

As Baym argues:

"...if researchers do not interview participants or have other access to their points of view, they have no grounds for claims about how online phenomena are understood or how they influence those who engage in and encounter those phenomena. Researchers can talk about the possibilities the text constructs but not about what real people do within or around those possibilities" (Baym 2006, p. 85).

Baym, but also Christine Hine (2000), argue that the Internet phenomenon is linked to our offline reality, and is not a distinct place which can be taken

separately from our real world. "The best work recognizes that the internet is woven into the fabric of the rest of life and seeks to better understand the weaving" (Baym 2006, p. 86).

The interviews were between forty-five minutes and two hours, and all of them took place in a public setting like a coffee shop or a library. All participants signed a consent form.

Regarding the five online interviews - they were meant to compliment the data coming from face-to-face interviews. I conducted these interviews with my friends on Facebook who agreed to take part in my research. Interviews conducted through email is an accepted practice in online settings. As Joëlle Kivits argues: "Email interviewing is an asynchronous mode of online interviewing. The one-to-one relationship between the researcher and the respondent, as well as the repetitive email exchanges, make interviewing by email a personal and thoughtful form of communication" (Kivits 2005, p. 35).

The main criticism which stems towards this kind of interviewing is that text-based communication might not enable close contact and therefore, not produce sufficient data. However, as Kivits specifies, to overcome this kind of problem, the interviewer and the interviewee have to feel comfortable with each other and have to have established a personal relationship. There has to be affinity with the participant. Therefore, prior to the interview, it is best to exchange first emails not directly related to the research subject but involving general discussions, like work, hobbies and interests.

However, in my case the problem of establishing close contact was overcome by the fact that all of my participants with whom I conducted online interviewing happened to be my Facebook 'friends' and I knew them all also in offline reality. Thus, affinity was established already before the interview. Participants were also reassured about the 'quality' of their participation before, during and after interviewing.

Interviews are combined with observations of public groups on Facebook.

There have been previous examples of combining offline methodologies such as interviews with online observation techniques (for example, Correll 1995,

Turkle 1996). According to Hine (2000), moving from online to offline can add authenticity to the findings and is a way of contextualizing data. Also Bakardjieva and Smith (2001) emphasise the need to capture “developments on both sides of the screen” to understand actions of cyberspace users better. (Bakardjieva and Smith, p. 69)

It is important to understand the connection between users' online and offline experiences and how their online participation affects their offline life and vice versa. In short, methodologically speaking, it is important to gain access to both online and offline environments of users. Being a user of Facebook myself, this research is ethnographic in that I was "careful to connect the facts that (I) observed with the specific features of the backdrop against which these facts occur, which are linked to historical and cultural contingencies"(Baszanger and Dodier 2004, p. 12). The aim was to describe Facebook from 'inside out' (Flick et al. 2004, p. 1), from the point of view of people who participate in it (including me) but in relation to the macro context in which it is situated. I was interested in the perceptions of Facebook by other users but also my own involvement with Facebook played a role. With this study I try to show the complexity of relationships around Facebook, such as its democratic potential, the role it plays in our perception of friendship, its reflection of the celebrity culture, and its influence on how we approach our privacy. Users' individual experiences with Facebook are important because they show that Facebook can be many different things and shed a better light into day-to-day activities of people within the network.

Groups were selected on the basis of key words in the search engine on Facebook. The key words were: 'culture', 'philosophy', 'sociology' and 'society'. From the groups which appeared on the search engine, the selection was based on the number of participants (more than hundred participants), activity of the group (based on the discussion forum and wall posts) and personal preferences of the researcher regarding the subject of the group. The aim was to see whether any serious discussion is possible on the network and analyse it in the context of its democratic potential.

For participants of my interviews I used names (which I changed), while for participants of groups which I was using for my research and which gave me permission to observe them, I used numbers.

This study, then, based on theory and data, provides a new insight into such a phenomenon as Facebook in order to better understand the functioning of informational capitalism, and to build on critical media/cultural studies.

## Chapter Five: Ethical considerations

In my ethical approach I mostly followed the guidelines developed by the Association of Internet Researchers Ethics Committee (2002, 2012), and literature written on ethics in Internet research (especially Hine 2005, and Bakardjieva and Feenberg 2001).

The main ethical issues stemming from this thesis were related to interviews with participants, conducting ethnographic research on the internet, and quoting directly from the Internet (Facebook).

The problem with Internet research is that there are still no clear standards about ethics in this field. There is still an ongoing debate about what is private and what is public.

As David Berry in his article 'Internet research: privacy, ethics and alienation: an open source approach' (2004) argues:

"A single, monolithic, ethical code mandating responses would be inappropriate (the same argument is made by Bakardjieva and Feenberg)...Certainly it seems that the researcher must take an active part in framing an ethical research position in order to ensure that unacceptable problems are avoided, and must be sensitive to the research questions and methodology being used" (Berry 2004, p. 5).

Some researchers still argue that Internet is a public domain, and therefore, all information posted on the Internet should be considered as public.

A problem with Facebook is that some information on it can be regarded as private (private profiles, private groups) but some information is specifically public, like some groups which are created with the intention of being public. While for my ethnographic research I treated all information as private and mostly used it to help me form the opinions, without using the data directly, with groups from which I quote the issue was more delicate. Even if the group is public - could I quote directly from the group's comments?

The Association of Internet Researchers Ethics Committee in its guidelines for research on the Internet (2002, 2012) advises to consider the expectations of the authors/subjects being studied. Do they believe that their communication is private (in which case, a consent should be sought) or are they being

researched in what can be considered as public domain, where actions of the subjects were intended to be public?

There is a difficulty with Facebook to make a definite distinction between public and private, however, because, and this we will see in the section on privacy, not all Facebook users realise that what they post in public groups is public. Therefore, I decided to treat all information I came across on Facebook as private initially, with some exceptions, like some texts with public pictures on Facebook, which I will discuss in the thesis and which were shared so many times on both Facebook and Google, that they can be considered as being definitely in public domain.

However, the rest of the information which I came across, even in public groups, I treated as private. Therefore, in order to quote some participants, I approached each user individually and explained the purpose of my research and in which context the quote would be used.

Here, the danger lay in the following:

“The internet holds various pitfalls for researchers, who can easily and unintentionally violate the privacy of individuals. For example, by quoting the exact words of a newsgroup participant, a researcher may breach the participant’s confidentiality even if the researcher removes any personal information. This is because powerful search engines such as Google can index newsgroups... so that the original message, including the email address of the sender, could be retrieved by anybody using the direct quote as a query” (Eysenbach and Till 2009, p. 1105).

This is the danger for public profiles only on Facebook, and not private ones (Google cannot locate private profiles).

I managed to approach almost all participants except one, when quoting directly from a Facebook public group, and while I did warn about the danger of exact wording of the quote, this danger disappeared entirely as both groups from which I quote were closed and none of the quotes can be traced. This also made it easier for me to decide what to do with quotes from the participant who never replied. I sent three messages to him without any reply. The problem with Facebook is that if you are not friends with the person, the message goes into 'the other' box, which few of users ever check or even know about. On

Facebook one can send a private message to a user, which goes into the inbox. However, there is also the 'other box' where private messages go from groups on Facebook and people with whom one is not a friend. At the end I decided to still quote this person, considering that these were public quotes in the first place and that the groups no longer exist and thus, individual users whom I quote cannot be traced. Instead of names I use numbers when I quote from the groups.

Regarding participants for the interviews, all names were changed, and all personal information is kept confidential and safe. A written consent was sought before I started the interviews.

I used pseudonyms for participants from both face-to-face and online interviews, which, according to the British Sociological Association (2002) is an acceptable practice:

I used pseudonyms rather than codes because of my methodology and research aim. My research is *qualitative*, and I wanted to give a personal voice in my narrative and make a story, which would combine theory but also accounts of other people, and I did not want to incorporate codes into my thesis, as it would look like a list of data.

A separate list with personal information was kept separately in a safe place (not on a computer), with matching real names.

As the ethical rules of our University specify:

"Details that would allow individuals to be identified should not be published, or made available, to anybody not involved in the research unless explicit consent is given by the individuals concerned, or such information is already in the public domain" (Research Ethics Policies and Procedures, Sheffield Hallam University 2004).

Also participants were given the right to withdraw from the research at any time from the start till the thesis is published. The list with real names will be destroyed ten years after the publication of my thesis, since it might be possible that I will continue doing research in this field and will need to contact my participants again.

## Part II: Analysis and Interpretation

This section builds up on critical media/cultural studies and where I address my research questions outlined in the introduction. Is Facebook a tool of democracy, creativity, self-expression, and friendship formation or is it mostly exploiting its users who are duped into believing that they are users of a wonderful tool while in fact they work for the network and provide their data for numerous advertisers? Or is Facebook all these things and we should take into account both its negative and positive aspects?

Part II, as mentioned in the context section, is organised around Poe's theory of media effects. I will show that I disagree with most points of Poe's theory, as any technology works according to societal aspects in place. The relationship between technology and society is a dialectal one, influencing each other and leading to new societal manifestations and norms. However, the points of Poe address very important questions regarding the implementation of a new technology, especially online, and allow me to look at Facebook from both macro and micro points of view.

Poe's theory is not followed point by point but organised according to the questions it addresses. Thus, in Chapter Six I am combining accessibility and searchability of Push Theory of Media Effects (2011), and am going to look at the power relationship within Facebook, autonomy, and identity. All these issues are linked with each other. In Chapter Seven I am combining fidelity and volume of Poe's theory and I am going to look at the activities of users on the network and propose a new term for a Facebook user, an *empathetic worker*. In Chapter Eight I am looking at the privacy question within Facebook. I will show that Facebook can be analysed from both individual privacy point of view and institutional privacy, which raises the question about surveillance, and this question is more important in the current age of 'informational capitalism' than how users navigate their individual privacy.

In Chapter Nine I am combining velocity and range of Poe's theory and am going to look at how democratic Facebook is and whether it allows for diversification and pluralism.

Each chapter is followed by a small conclusion and at the end I provide a general conclusion.

## Chapter Six: Facebook and Power

Poe in his 'Push Theory of Media Effects' (2011) argues that the more accessible a medium is, the more diffuse its network will be, with more equalized social practices. Similarly, he advances an idea that the more searchable a medium is, the more mapped its network will be, with amateurized social practices and increased autonomy.

According to Poe, the Internet is both a very accessible and very searchable medium. He says that since about 20 percent of the world population have access to the Internet, it makes it an accessible and diffuse network. In a diffuse network everyone has more or less equal power to send and receive messages and on Internet everyone is a user. On Internet everyone can have a voice. Even as Poe points out, there are ways in which the Internet is not really democratic (corporations and telecom companies own it, governments regulate it), it nevertheless gives equal opportunities to its users, and Poe thinks that the Internet is "probably the most democratic 'place' in the world" (Poe 2011, p. 224). Similarly Poe believes that the Internet is a very searchable medium and this promotes self-discovery and autonomy. On the Internet one can find information about people, facts, books, news, etc. Everything is stored on the net. The results which appear on search engines are also relevant and the material easily accessible. Thus, the Internet, Poe argues, is a mapped network, where the line between experts and amateurs is blurred. Anyone can participate in the content on the Internet, and anyone can search for information.

Facebook, being part of the Internet, shares many of its properties. It is a very accessible medium in most countries and anyone who is a member can, in theory, post any content on it. And this brings the question about Facebook and power. Do Facebook users have any power on the network, and if they have, what kind of power do they have? The exploration of power on Facebook also leads to the following question: what kind of role does a Facebook user play and how can we define the user in the age of 'informational capitalism'? How autonomous is also a Facebook user? These questions will be discussed in this chapter.

## Definition of Power in the age of 'informational capitalism'

### Centralised and diffuse notions of power

Power has been discussed in many ways. Weber, for instance understood power as "the chance of the man or number of men to realise their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in action" (Gečiene 2002, p. 117). Power is the ability to command resources in a particular context. He also separated notion of power and authority. When power was regarded by people as legitimate it became authority, or institutionalised power. The use of force is one way in which power can be exercised, however, for Weber it was much more interesting to analyse how power could be exercised without force. Thus, he introduced the notion of authority, when the power was exercised through obedience and mostly voluntary obedience, when the power was considered as legitimate (Weber 1968).

Weber distinguished between three types of power: charismatic power, traditional power and rational-legal power. Charismatic power was related to the character of the leader. Through coercion, inspiration, communicative skills and leadership a particular leader may achieve a central role within an organization or social setting. This type of power occurs, according to Weber, during times of social crisis. People lose confidence in existing authority and the charismatic leader takes advantage of the crisis. Since, this type of power is dependent on the personality of the leader, it is also unstable (Weber 1968).

Traditional authority is related to the belief in the legitimacy of well-established forms of power. It is based on loyalty to the leadership and is exercised through commands issued from the leader.

Rational-legal authority is based on a set of rules and in the belief that the process of rule creation and enforcement is legitimate. This form of power is established through bureaucracy. It is not dependent on a particular leader, because the authority resides in the organisation.

While Weber put accent on the importance of agency and decision-making, Marxist sociology saw power concentrated in the ruling class, where power was based on economics and involved class struggle. The existence of power for Marx is a consequence of the class structure of societies. Power is the capacity of one class to realise its interests in opposition to other classes. Thus, power cannot be separated from economic and class relations and power involves class struggles rather than conflicts between individuals. Moreover, according to Marx, the analysis of power cannot be done without some characterisation of the mode of production.

Power can be understood either as intensive or extensive. Intensive power is centralised, while extensive power is diffused (Doyle and Fraser 2010, p. 224).

Centralised power is usually associated with the modern state. States are usually referred to as entities possessing the means of legitimate violence over their populations and territories. The modern state system is "the organizational unit of political self-organization" (Fuchs 2008, p. 76). It is "based on organized procedures and institutions (representative democracy in many cases) that form the framework of the competition for the accumulation of power and political capital" (Fuchs 2008, p. 76).

Different groups compete with each other to gain power, when one group gains power, it means a decrease of power for other groups. "The state is based on asymmetrical distributions of power, domination, the permanent constitution of codified rules (laws) in the process of legislation (deciding), the sanctioning and controlling execution of these rules, and the punishment of the disobedience and violation of these rules (jurisdiction, executing)" (Fuchs 2008, p. 77).

Thompson (1995), for instance, basing his notion of power around a centralised concept, distinguishes between four sorts of power. Power for him is "a pervasive social phenomenon that is characteristic of different kinds of action and encounter, from the recognizably political actions of state officials to the mundane encounter between individuals in the street" (Thompson 1995, p. 13). Thus, the power, according to Thompson, is centralised, but distributed through different power channels.

The first sort of power is economic power. This power stems from productive activity, that is, "activity concerned with the provision of the means of subsistence through the extraction of raw materials and their transformation into goods which can be consumed or exchanged in a market" (Thompson 1995, p. 14). This type of power belongs to economic institutions (e.g. commercial enterprises).

The second type of power is political power, which "stems from the activity of coordinating individuals and regulating the patterns of their interaction" (Thompson 1995, p. 14). There are some institutions that are involved primarily with coordinating and regulation. This usually involved the state and its institutions. The capacity of the state to exercise this power usually stems from two related powers - coercive power and symbolic power.

The third type of power, coercive power, involves the use of force or threatened use of force to subdue or win the opponent. Physical force does not necessarily involve the use of human strength. It can be supported by the use of weapons and equipment, and the mere presence of force, without its usage, is a form of coercive power. Historically, this power had belonged to military institutions, and the most common type of coercive power is military power. Today, apart from pure military institutions there are also para-military organizations, such as police and carceral institutions.

The fourth type of power is cultural or symbolic power, which "stems from the activity of producing, transmitting and receiving meaningful symbolic forms" (Thompson 1995, p. 16). As Thompson says, symbolic activity is a very important part of social life. "Individuals are constantly engaged in the activity of expressing themselves in symbolic forms and in interpreting the expressions of others; they are constantly involved in communicating with one another and exchanging information and symbolic content" (Thompson 1995, p. 16).

Whereas symbolic activity is a fundamental part of social life, there are a range of institutions that historically assumed control over the means of communication and information. This includes religious institutions, which are mostly concerned with the production and distribution of symbolic forms relating to salvation, spiritual values and other beliefs, educational institutions, which

deal with the transmission of acquired symbolic content (or knowledge) and teaching skills and competences; and media institutions, "which are oriented towards the large-scale production and generalized diffusion of symbolic forms in space and time" (Thompson 1995, p. 17).

Thompson mainly discussed television and the power of media industries in transmitting symbolic content through radio and television. Thus, media institutions used to have unlimited control as to how to disseminate and present information and viewers had limited possibility to change the content.

However, in the age of the Internet and with the increasing influence of online social networks we can talk about a fifth form of power, a kind of empowerment, where ordinary people can express freely their views and even self-coordinate enough to bring upon some social changes. Thomson's definition places power in institutions, however, with the rise of Internet and informational capitalism, where control and capital flows are distributed across different channels, power becomes more liquid and fluid (Bauman 2012). And here comes the diffuse aspect of power, which is increasingly visible across online social networks.

Take, for instance, the case of Oscar Morales who created the first group against FARC - the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia on Facebook. FARC held seven hundred hostages, including Ingrid Betancourt, the Colombian presidential candidate. It held also four-year old Emmanuel and his mother Clara Rojas, who was a hostage for six years. The case of Emmanuel especially attracted the attention of people and the press. The authorities had tried to negotiate the release of Betancourt and others for years, without success. Then in December 2008 the guerrillas announced that they would release Rojas, her son Emmanuel and another hostage. This was greeted as extremely good news by the Columbian population as everyone wanted Emmanuel to be free (Kirkpatrick 2010, p. 1). However, the new year arrived and Emmanuel still was not freed. Then the Colombian president announced on national television that Emmanuel was no longer in the hands of FARC, but that he was seriously ill and FARC took him away from his mother and brought him to a peasant family. Even if the nation was happy with this news, people,

nevertheless felt outraged by FARC and by the fact that they negotiated the release of a boy whom they no longer had in their possession.

Oscar Morales checked for groups against FARC on Facebook and to his surprise did not find any. He then created his own group, by saying on its front page, "No more lies, no more killings, no more FARC" (Kirkpatrick 2010, p. 2). He named his group 'One million voices against FARC - Un Million de Voces Contra Las FARC'.

Already the morning after the creation of the group fifteen hundred people joined it and more members would join on the following days. The members started to participate in debates about FARC and also discuss what they could do as ordinary people against FARC. Oscar Morales proposed a demonstration; this idea was greeted with big enthusiasm. So, it was decided to stage a national march against FARC. The march was organized via Facebook, and as many as 2 million people took part in the march.

This shows that ordinary people now have the power to use social network sites for their advantage. These examples are actually quite rare, but the possibility is there and people use it either for good or bad causes. Users do have the power to self-organize and promote their cause. This promotes autonomy and the possibility of democratisation.

Social networks then can be described as diffuse power. As history shows, states were always suspicious of diffuse power, as can be demonstrated by its opposition to all forms of networked power. This was the case during the Renaissance when there was a tension between sovereign kings and the Papacy, when there was a power struggle between centralised, territorial states and a networked, non-territorial religion. Another example is cracking down by China's communist state of a self-organised religious network such as Falun Gong.

More recent examples involve Iran and 'Twitter Revolution' (though as Morozov, 2012, argues in his book, the role of Twitter was greatly exaggerated in the Western press) and Orange revolution in Ukraine. For instance, the success of Orange revolution was partly due to the use of mobile phones and text

messages. And Facebook also played an important role in the Occupy Movement.

Facebook can be characterised as a form of diffuse power, where people have the possibility to organize any event, including the event which would oppose the power of the State.

The definition of power as being diffuse has been referred to more in academia recently with the advance of the use of the Internet and online social networks, mostly by cultural studies. Diffuse power is linked to empowerment and to a greater possibility for self-expression via the Internet. For instance, Manuel Castells in 'Communication Power' talks about power and counter-power, where multinational corporates compete with the creative audience, and where biased media clash with grassroots media politics (Castells 2009). However, while Castells is cautiously optimistic about the potential that the new information technologies offer in terms of increased participation of creative audiences, he also warns about the commodification of the Internet by large corporations which try to turn creativity into a profit machine. "The interactive capacity of the new communication system ushers in a new form of communication, which multiplies and diversifies the entry points in the communication process. This gives rise to unprecedented autonomy for communicative subjects to communicate at large. Yet, this potential autonomy is shaped, controlled, and curtailed by the growing concentration and interlocking of corporate media and network operators around the world" (Castells 2009, p. 136). And as he says at another point: "All the major players are trying to figure out how to re-commodify Internet-based autonomous self-communication. They are experimenting with ad-supported sites, pay sites, free streaming video portals, and pay portals" (Castells 2009, p. 97).

However, if Castells looks at the socio-political situation and warns about the pitfalls for counter-power (which can be seen as a type of diffuse power), others tend to provide a techno-deterministic optimism, ignoring the mode of production of so called free Internet companies, most notably online social networks. Tapscott and Williams, for instance, believe that the new web technologies lead to 'a new economic democracy', where everyone has an

equal say (Tapscott and Williams 2007, p. 15). While Jenkins (2006) talks about the rise of a 'participatory culture' and compares it to a Habermasian public sphere.

For instance in his 'Convergence Culture' (2006) Jenkins talks about three new trends which have been shaping media later. These are media convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence.

By media convergence he means that today the content flows across multiple media platforms, different media industries cooperate with one another and media audiences have a greater choice about where to seek content. An example of media convergence on Facebook would be many posts of users where they provide links to different sites, including YouTube or CNN news. This permits users to get different kind of news and information and raises awareness about issues which otherwise would have remained unknown.

An example of media convergence would be Obama's presidential campaign in 2008.

The use of different media outlets and especially of online social networks was central to the election win. Obama used Twitter and Facebook, blogs and video-sharing sites including YouTube, to spread his political views and rally supporters. Staff of Obama directly responded to voters' questions about Obama's policies and views via social networking sites. In April 2010 President Obama announced that he was seeking re-election to the highest office via YouTube video.

By participatory culture Jenkins means that people today are actively participating in the creation of media content.

"Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands" (Jenkins 2006, p. 3).

And by collective intelligence Jenkins means that the consumption of media has become a collective process, where producers and consumers of media work side by side.

Jenkins gives an example of the reality show 'Survivor' whose viewers created an online forum, serving as an important platform for discussing the show, but also on some instances as a catalyst of changes in the show itself and as an important exchange of learning between viewers on different issues, not necessary limited to the show.

Thus, according to Jenkins, despite the increasing influence of big corporations, consumers and audience can still play an active role in the cultural formation.

However, this kind of techno-deterministic optimism totally ignores the political and economic context in which new media technologies are based. As Fuchs points out: "The rise of integrative information, communication, and community-building Internet platforms such as blogs, wikis, or social networking sites has not only promoted the development of new concepts – web 2.0, social software, social media, etc -, but also a new techno-deterministic optimism that resembles the Californian ideology that accompanied the commercial rise of the Internet in the 1990s" (Fuchs 2009, p. 96).

These views also ignore that fact that access to the Internet is not equal among countries and within countries. Not everyone has equal access to the Internet, and Poe is perhaps too optimistic when he suggests that the Internet is a very accessible and democratic medium.

The access to the Internet is limited by so called 'digital divide' which Manuel Castells defines as "inequality of access to the Internet" (Castells 2001, p. 248), while Jan Van Dijk defined it as "the gap between those who do and do not have access to computers and the Internet" (In Fuchs 2008, p. 213).

Jan Van Dijk and Kenneth Hacker (2000) distinguish four barriers to access to the Internet:

- 'Mental access' barrier, which refers to a lack of basic digital experience.
- 'Material access' barrier, which refers to a lack of possession of computers and network connections.
- 'Skills access' barrier, which refers to a lack of digital skills.

•‘Usage access’ barrier which means the lack of sufficient usage opportunities (Van Dijk and Hacker 2000).

Pippa Norris (2001) distinguishes between global divide, social divide and democratic divide. Global divide refers to the fact that the access to the Internet between developed and developing countries is not equal at all. Especially in Africa, access to the Internet is very limited. Social divide refers to the income gap, between those who can afford to buy a computer and an Internet access and those who cannot. And democratic divide means that some people have the possibility to use the Internet in order to participate in public life and some people do not. Thus, there is a difference in access to the Internet between countries and within countries.

Similarly, Facebook is also not accessible everywhere. In some countries Facebook is banned, such as China, Syria, Iran, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Also in some countries, Facebook is banned at the workplace, to prevent employees ‘wasting’ time on the site (I will look at it in the next chapter).

Finally, then placing too much emphasis on the possibility of empowerment that the Internet offers, one misses the aspect of capitalism in which the medium is based and how the new informational capitalism rather than empowering commodifies the creativity and transforms leisure time and ‘fun’ into profit.

Therefore, I would call the diffuse form of power that we see under informational capitalism - ‘externalised’ power (Debord 1992, p. 67). This is the fifth form of power following the definition of Thompson. However, while at a first glance this form of power can be seen as liberating, in reality it reinforces the working of capitalism. Debord refers to ‘externalised’ power in the context of a society of the spectacle, to which I will come back in the next chapter in more details.

What the author says in his book is that through the creation of numerous entertainment such as shops, reality TV, etc, and moving the work away from factories to the service sector, the attention of workers has been taken away from the class struggle, giving them the illusion that they are free since they can now shop and engage in numerous entertainment. This is similar argument to Bauman (2012), who points out that we live in the age of liquid modernity, where it is increasingly difficult to pin down to who is really in control. Due to

globalisation and capitalism taking on a more liquid form, we live in an area of fluidity and have the impression that we can do whatever we want. Problems are now situated in the private sphere, instead of worrying about politics and class struggles, people worry about where to shop, which diet to follow and what to buy. One of the remarkable achievements of 'fluid' capitalism was to create an illusion that we achieved emancipation and liberated ourselves. And as Bauman remarks by referring to Cornelius Castoriadis, "What is wrong with the society we live in, said Cornelius Castoriadis, is that it stopped questioning itself. This is a kind of society which no longer recognises any alternative to itself and thereby feels absolved from the duty to examine, demonstrate, justify (let alone prove) the validity of its outspoken and tacit assumptions" (Bauman 2012, pp. 22-23). Moving away from the factory to the service sector, together with deregulation and privatization, and reconstruction of the urban space, created a pseudo-community which has its public sphere in the shopping mall. The society of the spectacle pushed important issues into the private sphere, instead of worrying about the issues that politicians are working on, we are more preoccupied about the details of their private lives, which the mass press provides to us in great details, taking our attention away from what really matters. However, "in the course of this complex and terrible evolution which has brought the era of class struggles to a new set of conditions, the proletariat of the industrial countries has lost its ability to assert its own independent perspective" (Debord 1992, p. 114). But because we think that we are free and emancipated and have the possibility to critique and question and say our opinions, we are increasingly under the illusion that we have the power to change things, while in fact we don't. Watching the reality TV and voting for participants, shopping where we want and putting our opinion under the item on the Internet, only reinforces the working of capitalism. "But when the proletariat discovers that its own *externalised* power contributes to the constant reinforcement of capitalist society, no longer only in the form of its alienated labour but also in the forms of trade unions, political parties, and state powers that it had created in the effort to liberate itself, it also discovers through concrete historical experience that it is the class that must totally oppose all rigidified externalisations and all specializations of power" (Debord 1992, p. 67, highlight by the author).

Online social networks through operating by externalised power function by the same token as shopping malls. Shopping malls were created in all urban spaces in the West in order to keep us preoccupied and entertained. By having the illusion that we can shop for whatever we want, we stop questioning the real problems which happen around us, since we are too busy with planning our next purchase. However, shops are just an illusion taking us away from real problems. Power is the ability to exercise the control by some individuals over the rest. Under 'soft' or 'liquid' capitalism, power is dispersed and liquid, creating a new form of externalised power, which is, however, simply a way to create an impression of emancipation and freedom. The main power is still the power of capitalists over the rest of population and is still set by those in power.

In the next section I am going to look at how 'externalised power' operates on Facebook.

### **Externalised power on Facebook**

Facebook is a very accessible medium. Anyone with Internet access and an email address can create a profile on Facebook. As I mentioned previously, in some countries Facebook is banned, however, in the UK where the penetration of the Internet is very high (82.5% of the population according to Internet World Statistics) Facebook is very largely used and is very accessible. The UK belongs to the three countries where Facebook is used the most, with the other two being the United States and Indonesia (The New York Times 2010).

According to Poe's theory, an accessible medium leads to diffuse network where control is dispersed throughout the network, with egalitarianism as ideology.

At a first glance, on Facebook everyone can have a say. People can post any comments, starting from trivial and ending with deep reflections about serious issues. People can create groups, post petitions, organise events and even have a say about what Facebook's creators are doing with the site.

Facebook is a part of Web 2.0/Web 3.0, where users are not only consumers of the content but also its creators.

In the first phase of the development of the Internet, World Wide Web was dominated by hyperlinked textual structures, called Web 1.0. It is characterized by text-based sites and is mostly a system of cognition (Fuchs 2008). However, with the rise of such sites as YouTube, MySpace and Facebook, both communication and cooperation became important features of the Web. The Web characterised by communication is called Web 2.0. Web 3.0, on the other hand, is not only communicative but also cooperative. An example of Web 3.0 is Wikipedia, where everyone can participate in the creation of the content. Thus, Fuchs says that Web 1.0 (where we mostly read the text but do not participate) is a tool for thought, Web 2.0 is a medium for human communication and Web 3.0 technologies "are networked digital technologies that support human cooperation" (Fuchs 2008, p. 127).

The term Web 2.0 was popularised by Tim O'Reilly and John Battelle, who said that "Web 2.0 is all about harnessing collective intelligence" (O'Reilly and Battelle 2009, p. 1).

What they meant is that new media platforms emerged which were different from old media in a way that they allowed users to participate in interactive information sharing and be creators of the content.

Thus, on Facebook, according to the definition of Web 2.0/Web 3.0, people create their own content and are also taking part in the site creation.

The example of active audience on Facebook can be seen in the reaction of its users to some of the initiatives taken by Facebook's owners.

On November 6, 2007 Facebook launched Beacon, a controversial social advertising system, that sent data from external websites to Facebook, allegedly in order to allow targeted advertisements and so that users could share activities with their friends.

However, as soon as it was launched it created considerable controversy, due to privacy concerns. People did not want the information about their purchases on the Internet to appear on Facebook's news feed for everyone to see. There was a story about a guy who had bought an engagement ring for his girlfriend,

planned as a surprise, but this news appeared on Facebook for everyone to see. As this person complained:

"I purchased a diamond engagement ring set from overstock in preparation for a New Year's surprise for my girlfriend. Please note that this was something meant to be very special, and also very private at this point (for obvious reasons). Within hours, I received a shocking call from one of my best friends of surprise and "congratulations" for getting engaged.(!!!)

Imagine my horror when I learned that overstock had published the details of my purchase (including a link to the item and its price) on my public facebook newsfeed, as well as notifications to all of my friends. ALL OF MY FRIENDS, including my girlfriend, and all of her friends, etc..." (Forrester 2007)

The same month a civic action group MoveOn.org created a Facebook group and online petition asking Facebook not to publish users' activity from other websites without explicit permission from a user. In ten days the group had 50,000 members. Facebook changed Beacon so that users had first to approve any information from external websites appearing on the news feed. However, it was found that the information from external websites was still collected by Facebook which provoked further controversy and angry reactions from Facebook's users.

In response Facebook announced in December that people could opt out of Beacon and Mark Zuckerberg apologised to Facebook's users.

On September 21, 2009 Facebook announced that it was shutting down the service completely.

As Scott Karp (2007) remarks in his article 'Facebook Beacon: A Cautionary Tale About New Media Monopolies' the whole story with Beacon is much more interesting and important to the evolution of media than simply the reason why Beacon did not work.

Previously media companies could have complete control over their content. Even if we do not like advertisements on TV, we still watch the TV. Media companies have complete control over a TV channel, where a consumer has a little choice. However, with the advance of the Internet, the user has also control over the content. The nature of monopoly has changed. Facebook is not really a monopoly, according to Karp, it simply has high switching costs.

"So Facebook got caught in the perfect storm of believing it had a monopoly - when it didn't - and having the unprecedented technical capacity to abuse the privilege that it didn't actually have...It may well be that natural monopolies in media which drove the media business for the last century - are dead. And without monopoly control, you don't have license to exploit your audience, i.e. your users" (Karp 2007).

Beacon initiative showed that Facebook users want to have a say in how Facebook is run.

Similarly in 2010 when Facebook changed the privacy setting of its users by allowing everyone to view friends of everyone else and photos by default as well as making all profiles publicly searchable on Google, Facebook's users again actively reacted to the change by proclaiming their anger either through status updates or group creation. Facebook responded to it by reinstalling the option of hiding the list of friends, which, however, was later removed again.

Coming back to Debord (1992), who defined our society as a society of the spectacle, where social relations between people are mediated by images, the examples of creative and active audience on Facebook can be seen as instances of 'dérive' and 'détournement'. Debord was a part of the Situationist International movement, comprising avant-garde artists and philosophers, according to which people became passive spectators of life instead of active participants. Debord and Vaneigem (2012) propose to actively engage with life through the creation of *situations*. Situation, according to Situationists is "a moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a game of events" (Vejby and Wittkower 2010, p. 103). Situations should be created by a collective effort, in order to challenge the status quo and the society of the spectacle and offer new views on the environment. Creation of 'dérive' and 'détournement' are examples of situations. 'Dérive' is when we start using the urban street for other purposes than it was originally intended for, engaging with architecture and design in a creative way, while 'détournement' is when we alter what is given to us by the society of consumption and give it another, often subversive meaning. It is also part of a more general concept of cultural jamming, which was popularised in 1984 by the sound collage band Negativland, and came from 'radio jamming' when public frequencies can be subverted for independent communication.

Culture jamming is a technique or tactic used by anti-consumerist movements to subvert mainstream media culture and includes re-working logos, fashion statements and product images to challenge consumerist culture (Dery 2010). Détournement is an artistic form of culture jamming with the main focus on altering and mixing texts and messages to give them a new meaning.

Vejby and Wittkower in "Facebook and Philosophy" (2010) talk about how users of Facebook approach actively the culture around us through the use of 'détournement', which they define as "the subversion of pre-existing artistic productions by altering them, giving them a new meaning and placing them with a new context" (Vejby and Wittkower 2010, p. 104).

They give an example of how users reacted to the privacy changes announced by Facebook by approaching changes ironically and through a play of words. They quoted also my status update in the chapter, which actually lots of users put on Facebook almost at the same time. (I was approached by D.E. Wittkower asking me whether he could quote my status update in his book).

**"Ekaterina Netchitailova** if you don't know, as of today, Facebook will automatically index all your info on Google, which allows everyone to view it. To change this option, go to Settings - -> Privacy Settings --> Search - -> then UN-CLICK the box that says 'Allow indexing'. Facebook kept this one quiet. Copy and paste onto your status for all your friends ASAP" (Vejby and Wittkower 2010, p. 105).

After this status update another one follows from a different user:

**"David Graf** If you don't know, as of today, Facebook will automatically start plunging the Earth into the Sun. To change this option, go to Settings - -> Planetary Settings - -> Trajectory then UN-CLICK the box that says 'Apocalypse'. Facebook kept this one quiet. Copy and paste onto your status for all to see" (Vejby and Wittkower 2010, p. 105).

And shortly afterwards another update appears:

**"Dale Miller** If you don't, as of today, Facebook staff will be allowed to eat your children and pets. To turn this option off, go to Settings - -> Privacy Settings - ->

then Meals. Click the top two boxes to prevent the employees of Facebook from eating your beloved children and pets. Copy this to your status to warn your friends" (Vejby and Wittkower 2010, p. 105).

One of my friends posted the following status update:

"WARNING: New privacy issue with Facebook! As of tomorrow, Facebook will creep into your bathroom when you're in the shower, smack your arse, and then steal your clothes and towel. To change this option, go to Privacy Settings > Personal Settings > Bathroom Settings > Smacking and Stealing Settings, and uncheck the Shenanigans box. Facebook kept this one quiet. Copy and paste on your status to alert the unaware" (Robert, online status update on Facebook).

At a first glance, this playful interchange allows Facebook's users to actively react to Facebook's policy and approach media content as active agents.

"This kind of play may be silly, but it is significant. Of course, we should be concerned about privacy and Google-indexing of our Facebook posts, but the sense of participation and playful ridicule helps us to approach the media and culture around as active agents rather than passive recipients. It may not be the fullest form of political agency, but it's an indication of the kind of active irony which online culture is absolutely full of, and represents a kind of resistance and subversion" (Vejby and Wittkower 2010, pp. 105-106).

However, as already mentioned Facebook did maintain its new privacy policy despite controversy and now all profiles are visible to everyone by default apart from if one manually corrects privacy settings. Moreover, it remains unclear who exactly has access to data of users on Facebook and Facebook is ultimately a corporation. To what extent can users actually oppose policies of Facebook?

Let's, for instance, look at how Facebook expanded as a corporation. The first \$500,000 in funding to Facebook came from Peter Thiel, founder and former CEO of PayPal. Thiel is on the board of the radical right-wing VanguardPAC and he personally donated \$21,200 to Arnold Schwarzenegger's campaign for governor (Abrahamson 2005, p. 1). Peter Thiel still has a 2,5% stake in Facebook (<http://whoownsfacebook.com>).

Later Facebook received \$13 million in venture capital from Accel Partners. Jim Breyer, the president of Accel is on the board of National Venture Capital Association together with Cilman Louie, who is head of In-Q-Tel.

Apparently the CIA set up In-Q-Tel in 1999 with the aim of supporting companies that provide 'data warehousing and mining' in a 'secure community of interest' (Abrahamson 2005, pp. 2-3). Other goals included 'profiling search agents which are self-sustaining, to reduce its reliance on CIA funding' (Abrahamson 2005, pp. 2-3).

It does sound little bit like Facebook, taking also into account the fact that reportedly the CIA is recruiting directly from Facebook and is using Facebook as a surveillance function. Accel Partners still have an impressive 10% stake in the corporation. Other important shareholders are Mark Zuckerberg (28,2%) who has a voting control in Facebook, due to how shares are counted, Dustin Moskovitz (7,6%), Digital Sky Technologies (5,4%), and interestingly, Jim Breyer with a 6% stake. So, it means that Accel Partners and its people have a 16% stake in Facebook all together (<http://whoownsfacebook.com>).

In 2007 Microsoft also acquired a small stake in Facebook. It has currently a 1,6% stake in the corporation, while Interpublic, which is one of the largest advertising agencies has a whopping 25% stake in Facebook. And this brings the question as what is the exact purpose of Facebook, to make money or make the world more open and connected, as the statement of Facebook itself proclaims everywhere, on its site, in its financial statements and in interviews that the company's CEO and other shareholders give?

For instance, when one opens Facebook page, one is greeted with the following sentence: "Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life" (Facebook 2013). In its overview of first quarter 2013 results, the company's statement is the following: "Our mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (Facebook, first quarter results 2013). In numerous interviews Mark Zuckerberg puts emphasis on the fact that Facebook is about building community, that it is all about making the world more connected and that he is not after money. This is an impressive image building for the company and its CEO since the policies and the direction that the

company has been taking prove to pursue a totally different goal. Facebook is a corporation pursuing profit.

In one of the interviews for Wired magazine, Mark Zuckerberg says the following: “Applications aren’t the centre of the world, people are” (Wired 2013). This is an interesting statement for a CEO of a company whose whole business is built on applications. In fact the third sentence of the mission statement in Facebook’s annual report of 2012 talks about applications: “Developers can use the Facebook platform to build applications (apps) and websites that integrate with Facebook to reach our global network of users and to build products that are more personalised and social” (Facebook, Annual report 2012, p. 5). In its overview of first quarter results of 2013, the company says the following: “Our mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. We build *products* that support our mission by creating utility for users, *developers*, and *advertisers*” (Facebook, First quarter results 2013, highlights by the author). It is interesting to observe how Facebook uses itself the notion of power, by emphasising the fact that it gives power to the users, while the business model of Facebook is aimed at building products (in other words, advertisements) that bring company its profit. This can be seen quite clearly in the financial results of the company. For the first quarter 2013 results revenues from advertisement represented 85% of total revenues. And as the company says it in its annual report 2012: “We generate substantially all of our revenues from advertising and from fees associated with our Payments infrastructure that enables users to purchase virtual and digital goods from our Platform developers.” And as it emerges clearly while reading the annual report, applications allow advertisers to reach for potential customers (Facebook, Annual report 2012, p. 44). So, when Mark Zuckerberg makes statements like that, it is in order to create a certain impression: that Facebook is not about the money, that it cares about its users, and that the whole advertisement business almost doesn’t matter. To what extent does Facebook care about its users can be seen in the policies adopted by Facebook towards millions of people who log in there every day. In 2012 the company abolished its voting mechanism, depriving the users of any say as to how Facebook should be run (Facebook 2013).

As to whether Mark Zuckerberg does not care about the money, he doesn't have to. His estimated net worth is \$13 billion as of March 2013 (Warner 2013). His net worth is based on his stake in Facebook and fluctuates with the price of the shares of Facebook. When Facebook started to publically trade Mark Zuckerberg's worth was between 19 and 22 billion dollars. At \$13 billion worth Mark Zuckerberg is the fourth richest person in California. Prices of Facebook fluctuate depending on whether investors believe in the company generating more revenues, based currently mostly on the sale of advertisements.

Next to advertisements, which cast a doubt as to whether Facebook's mission is indeed in order to make the world more open and connected, the company also stores all the data that users provide to the site or on other sites when Facebook is open on one's computer. In February 2012 Facebook announced partnership with four companies that collect behavioural data. These companies include Acxiom which aggregates data from such resources as court records, financial services companies and federal government documents. Also Datalogix, which has a database of spending habits of more than million Americans, and Epsilon, which has a database of transactions at different retailers. The fourth company is BlueKai which creates cookies for brands to monitor who visits their websites. In 2011 Facebook also introduced retargeting campaign, allowing companies to place advertisements on those users' pages who had visited their sites previously or those email addresses they have. For instance, one optometrist in Brooklyn placed ads on Facebook's pages of users who were overdue for an annual exam. In one week, more than 50 people clicked on the ad (Sengupta 2013).

While I will discuss the privacy policy of Facebook in greater detail in the section on privacy, it is worth mentioning here that if one reads carefully the privacy policy of Facebook, it emerges that Facebook collects a substantial amount of information on its users, and in the majority of cases users are not even aware about what is collected on them. Moreover, it appears that Facebook still has control over our profiles even after the profile has been deactivated. The new privacy policy of Facebook, updated in December 2012, and then in August 2013, clearly states that the network uses the data of its users and sells it to advertisers.

All this raises questions about the equality of users and to what extent can we call the power on Facebook diffuse when users in reality have little say in the operations of the company and serve mainly the purpose of generating revenues for it?

In the next section I will argue that the diffuse aspect of power on Facebook is close to the notion of diffuse power as discussed by Foucault. For Foucault power is everywhere, diffuse and situated in discourse, 'regimes of truth' and knowledge. Power is a sort of metapower or regime of truth which operates in the society. The current regime of truth is 'soft' capitalism, whose technique is to provide us with an illusion of increased freedom while at the same time employing a large scale techniques of surveillance, both political and economic. Therefore, any illusion of freedom is what I call externalised power. In the case of Facebook, users have the impression that they get a service for free, and are free and emancipated while using it, while in reality Facebook controls the data of users, surveys them and sells them as a product. Online social networks provide us with an opportunity to make our voices heard perhaps more, however, the surveillance which accompanies it reduces the real possibility of a resistance because power is increasingly situated in the hands of corporations who accumulate data on us.

### **Foucault and diffuse power**

As already mentioned, Facebook is a corporation and it is unclear what exactly is happening with our data on the network. Apart from the question of privacy, there is also a question of surveillance. Who controls what and who exactly has access to our private data?

This is indeed complicated as it is not very clear what the role of Facebook and of different governments is in the question of who has access to the content on Facebook.

For instance, in late 2009 *The Daily Telegraph* reported that the UK government was taking additional steps to use video surveillance by putting in place a legal requirement that all telecom and internet service providers should "keep a record of every customer's personal communications showing who they are

contacting" and "when and where and which website they are using" (Edwards 2009, and Doyle and Fraser 2010).

More recently on 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2013 the Washington Post published a sensational story saying that nine biggest tech companies, including Facebook, had 'knowingly' participated in a widespread surveillance programme by the National Security Agency of the US and the FBI (Bott 2013). The original claim was alleging the following: "The National Security Agency and the FBI are tapping directly into the central servers of nine leading U.S. internet companies, extracting audio, video, photographs, e-mails, documents and connection logs that enable analysts to track a person's movements and contacts over time" (Bott 2013). The following day the companies mentioned in the article made an announcement that they did not know about the programme and that the US government did not have a permission to access their database, while the author of the original article backtracked and changed substantially the wording of his claims.

This raises questions about the extent of the surveillance in the current society and to what extent does the usage of Facebook reflect the increasing monitoring of our daily activities in the 'informational capitalism'. Also, to what extent was the author of the original article, claiming such sensational revelations influenced by the US government itself to change his original article? This is something which we will probably never know.

I discussed already Foucault in the context section and how his thoughts can be relevant for the analysis of Facebook. I am going to elaborate on some of his points further to show that Facebook operates through surveillance and 'invisible' control.

In his work *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault looked at the methods of state coercion over individuals from a historical point of view. He looked at how states once exercised power over individuals through physical punishment, including torture, but gradually changed through time towards more subtle methods of exercising power. The key idea of Foucault was that power was exercised through *surveillance*. Surveillance for Foucault happens when

someone "is seen but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (Foucault 1977, p. 200).

One of the techniques Foucault cited was the Panopticon, an architectural design developed by Jeremy Bentham in the nineteenth century for prisons, insane asylums, schools, factories and hospitals. In place of violent methods that were once used to exercise power over its citizens, the new modern and democratic state had a different tool to control its citizens. The Panopticon offered a sophisticated internalised coercion which allowed the constant observation of prisoners, who were separated from each other. The new structure allowed guards to observe the cell, while remaining unseen. This was set as a new control mechanism with the idea of constant surveillance.

The Panopticon led Foucault to explore the relationship between systems of social control and people in a disciplinary situation, and link power and knowledge, since in the view of Foucault, power and knowledge come from observing others.

"Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, 'becomes true'. Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice...There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations" (Foucault 1977, p. 27).

Thus, according to Foucault, "it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" (Sarup 1993, p. 74).

Foucault says that the modern state is characterised by disciplinary power which has been described as a "fundamental instrument in the constitution of industrial capitalism and of the type of society that is its accompaniment and its development and exercise as inextricably associated with the emergence of particular apparatuses of knowledge and the formation of the human sciences" (Gečiene 2002, p. 120).

The power comes from the knowledge the observer has accumulated from his observations, and in the case of Facebook the knowledge comes from observing the behaviour of its users and by having access to the personal data of people. Here, the disciplinary power is exercised invisibly. No one is exactly sure whether the government indeed monitors on Facebook and no one is exactly sure about what exactly the government would do with this information. This is a sort of *invisible power*, where no one is sure about who has access to what exactly but which nevertheless leads to the fact users do feel as if they are being monitored.

In his work 'The Subject and Power' (1982) Foucault talks about pastoral power which originated in Christian institutions. This power, in its traditional form was salvation oriented, oblation and individualizing. "This form of power is salvation oriented (as opposed to political power). It is oblation (as opposed to the principle of sovereignty); it is individualizing (as opposed to legal power); it is coextensive and continuous with life; it is linked with a production of truth - the truth of the individual himself" (Foucault 1982, p. 783).

As Foucault says, a new kind of individualizing, pastoral power emerged in the eighteenth century, which was now held by the state, and where individual power of its citizens should be submitted to a set of specific rules.

"I don't think that we should consider the 'modern state' as an entity which was developed above individuals, ignoring what they are and even their existence, but, on the contrary, as a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form and submitted to a set of very specific patterns" (Foucault 1982, p. 783).

This new pastoral power was no longer salvation oriented, but 'ensuring'. Salvation took on new meanings: health, well-being, security, protection against accidents, etc. The number of people exercising this power has increased and diversified and included now state entities, police and other officials.

For Foucault power has become integrated into the daily routine of the citizens. Power is exercised through self-observing behaviour of the citizens and it becomes 'normalized'.

Facebook can be seen as a unique form of pastoral power. Here, users behave in a certain way, because they know that they might be observed by other users, as well as by states and corporations.

As Theo Röhle says, power instead of centralized and institutionalized systems is now: "seen to permeate society in formations of changeable and interlinked networks" where networks are "utterly intertwined with knowledge and the formation of the subject", and he concludes that since "subjectivity is heavily intertwined with power and knowledge, there can be no talk about an autonomous individual" (Röhle 2005, p. 415).

In this respect Facebook can be seen as a new form of Panopticon, where users watch other users and are watched in return. Here surveillance is normalized into everyday life of the users, which according to Christian Fuchs leads to the fact that people might stop questioning surveillance.

"Although watching reality TV series such as *Big Brother*, *Survivor*, *MTV Real World*, *The Osbournes*, *Candid Camera*, *Trigger Happy TV*, *Scare Tactics*, and so on, reading Weblogs, watching people on their personal Webcams or sexcams (...), using location-based services on mobile phones, ambient intelligence, and so on, is fun for many people and enhances their lifeworlds, a significant point about these phenomena is that they have an ideological function and help normalize surveillance in everyday life. If surveillance is considered as an ubiquitous phenomenon, people might be less inclined to critically question coercive surveillance by states or corporations" (Fuchs 2008, p. 270).

Although Fuchs does not mention Facebook in this instance, this 'normalized' surveillance can be applied to the network as well. We do not know for sure whether we are being watched by states and corporations on Facebook, but this 'fear' that people are watched is nevertheless present when using Facebook. For instance, some users believe that Facebook censors their posts and even removes some accounts of users based on their activity on the network. One user wrote the following as a comment to an article talking about the role of the network in the Occupy movement:

"I believe as an Occupy Organizer, and activist - I have experienced a more dramatic incidence of facebook censorship. I experienced what is termed a 'roadblock' where facebook requires a redflagged person to view sample photos

from their album and identify people in the facial recognition software. I was required to identify people in my protest album in order to regain control of my account. I was not allowed an alternative, and after choosing not to identify activists and failing this roadblock, I was not given my account back..." (Cohen 2012).

However, whether Facebook actually monitors the accounts with the intention of censoring them or removing them is a question of debate. As the author of the article under which the comment appeared says:

"...More often than not, the 'censors' are actually other Facebook users. 'The customer is always right' philosophy is in full force at Facebook. It's hard to believe this, but the majority of the site's membership sympathise with Republicans. When any of them see things they don't like, they can flag the content. But you can do this too...My stance comes from seeing this phenomenon repeat itself, with people calling Facebook the censor when the actual censorship was a response to a member's complaint" (Cohen 2012).

The above debate shows that it is not really clear who is watching whom on Facebook. Governments, corporations or users themselves? But the fact is that it insures a normalization of certain behaviour patterns among Facebook's users.

This 'normalization' can also be seen in how people join Facebook. There is an enormous pressure to join, to actually 'do' something on Facebook after joining and there is a problem with leaving Facebook as well if someone decides to close one's account. If anything it is considered to be normal to be on online social network sites and to reveal personal details about oneself. People with whom I talked about Facebook, mention such things as: 'missing out', 'being out of the loop', being considered as weirdo - if not being on Facebook.

Joanna, a participant, told me the following on the question as to why she joined Facebook:

"I joined it about, I think it must've been about two years ago now...And I did it because everybody was joining, so I didn't like the idea of missing out..." (Joanna, face-to-face interview)

Tom, another participant, also mentions the pressure to join:

"I guess, I had lots of friends who were on Facebook, and after a while, of almost resisting, it almost felt like a necessity to join in order to maintain

contact with certain people, because a lot of them were communicating through Facebook. Other means of communication, like email or text were not used as much. So, for me it was like being out of the loop. So, I guess, it felt almost like a pressure to join in order to know what was going on." (Tom, face-to-face interview)

It is also difficult to leave Facebook for the same reasons. Apart from the fact that our profile information is still being stored by Facebook, when one leaves, as discussed previously, there is the difficulty to leave in order not to miss out on things.

Consider, for instance, what Mark told me about leaving Facebook:

"I'm often in two minds in the way of sort of advocating for it and saying just, I'm just going to take myself off this site, close this site...but I don't like to either because I realise that one or two friends who are on there, you know use it to invite people to parties and things like this, and then I've not looked at it enough and have missed out...Because I think 'well, how come I didn't get invited? And they say it was on Facebook and I'm like, damn - because I haven't looked at it for six months" (Mark, face-to-face interview).

Facebook has become a part of daily routine of many people, and no wonder that governments might get an interest in the network, considering how much data on the citizens the network provides.

The pressure to join Facebook is linked to the process of normalization of surveillance. If everyone joins and everyone watches, then it becomes a norm. People, in fact, provide voluntarily their data and even if the governments do collect information on their citizens, it is a voluntary process. Here we can remember what Weber said about power. For him domination was related to obedience, interest, belief and regularity. He remarked that "every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is, and *interest* (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience" (Weber 1968, p. 212). Thus, for him a power relation involves voluntary compliance and obedience. People are not forced to obey, but do so voluntary.

Consider, for instance, the discussion of some Facebook users in one of the groups on Facebook. The discussion was about whether Facebook could be compared to the Panopticon.

User 1: "I think it's tempting but ultimately facile and a bit simplistic to compare FB to a panopticon. It is a decentralized form of observation, indeed, but there is one crucial difference: you can leave FB any time you want, and membership is not mandatory " (Facebook and Foucault, public group on Facebook 2010, now closed).

This comment is followed by a comment from another user:

User 2 "I think you're right; it is bit simplistic to compare fb to panopticon

Still, I have this question, when you wrote, 'you can leave fb any time you want, and membership is not mandatory', are you taking into consideration underlying social 'normalizing' forces at play? As you pointed out, the panopticon is all about 'normalization'.

You may see this as nit-picking, but I have definitely sensed some vague form of social pressure to become a fb member (albeit usually from within one's own circle of acquaintances)" (Facebook and Foucault, public group on Facebook 2010, now closed).

And here is a comment by another user:

User 3: "Yes, it may be simplistic to compare fb to the Panopticon, but at the same time, fb is closer to producing those same effects than not. While it is true that you can leave fb at any time, unlike a prison or an asylum, I am in agreement (with user 2) that there is some social pressure (in varying degrees) to be a fb member. And that pressure is, of course, connected to normalization. It is true that the Panopticon is not about being watched, but it is ultimately about programming us to monitor ourselves. And that is where I think fb is successful, in its ability to have us monitor ourselves as well as other members" (Facebook and Foucault, public group on Facebook 2010, now closed).

As the reader can see the main discussion about whether Facebook can be compared to the Panopticon is centred around the question of voluntary participation on Facebook. Indeed, if it is voluntary, can it be compared to the Panopticon?

On the other hand, this kind of discussion also shows that users engage in debates about what is happening around them and this group has been created on Facebook itself. It shows the counter-power that Castells mentions in his work and can be seen as a 'transformational capacity' as defined by Giddens, which he saw as the possibility to intervene in events and in some way alter them (Giddens 1985, p. 7). According to Giddens when there is power there is also counter-power and he talks about 'dialectic of control'. "All strategies of control employed by superordinate individuals or groups call forth counter-strategies on the part of subordinates (Giddens 1985, p. 10f). Users of Facebook by creating the groups where they discuss the surveillance aspect of Facebook counter surveillance and try to resist it. This is the diffuse aspect of power that Foucault proposed, for whom power also had positive and creative aspects. Power, according to Foucault is not always coercive as was seen by Weber, it can also be productive. "Power doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but...it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be thought of as a productive network which runs through the whole social body" (Foucault 1990, p. 119).

The only problem with Foucault's view on power is that he never gave it a precise definition and while he saw power as diffuse, being able to be also productive and creative, he insisted that surveillance is a negative aspect of power. Foucault was writing before the increasing surveillance exercised by states and corporations over individuals which the Internet provided and he would probably define himself power in more negative terms if he still lived to see the rise of online social networks and the world wide web. With Web 2.0 we can talk about power and counter-power, as well as surveillance and counter-surveillance, but the fact remains that the real power is in large extent in the hands of corporations and the states. "But we cannot assume that these potentials are symmetrically distributed because conducting surveillance requires resources (humans, money, technology, time, political influence, etc). The two most powerful collective actors in capitalist societies are corporations and state institutions" (Fuchs 2012, p. 3).

Apart from the government, the information on Facebook provides invaluable knowledge to many corporations (including Facebook itself) and companies.

Thrift (2005) talks about knowledge economy, or 'soft capitalism', which underlines the current capitalistic society, where capitalism has become knowledgeable in unprecedented ways and where, as David Beer argues, "knowledges that are transmitted through gossip and small talk which often prove surprisingly important are able to be captured and made into opportunities for profit" (Beer 2008, p. 523).

On Facebook we engage constantly into gossip and small talk and this can be used by many companies to target their advertisements. While we update our statuses or a profile we have the illusion that we are free, but everything that we put on Facebook is accumulated and processed by it in order to sell it. This is simply an externalised aspect of power. We are free on Facebook to do what we want, but Facebook has real power in terms of what it does with our data.

And this leads to the following question. Are we indeed customers of Facebook or are we simply its product, as Andrew Brown asks rightly in his article "Facebook is not your friend."

"Anyone who supposes that Facebook's users are its customer has got the business model precisely backwards. Users pay nothing, because we aren't customers, but product. The customers are the advertisers to whom Facebook sells the information users hand over, knowingly or not" (Brown 2010).

Even games and quizzes can be regarded as another tool to collect more information about us. Almost everything on Facebook is a means to harvest data about its users and therefore, Facebook is much more complicated than a wonderful tool to stay in touch with people. It is also a powerful advertising machine, a sophisticated business model, and the exchange on Facebook is two-sided. We get a tool to communicate with our friends, while in exchange we provide information about ourselves, which can be used by the government, advertising agencies, market research companies and Facebook itself.

## Facebook' users: customers or Facebook's product?

Alvin Toffler (1980) coined the term *prosumer* within information society. Axel Bruns (2007) applied this term to new media and coined the term producers - where users become producers of digital knowledge and technology.

"Produsage, then, can be roughly defined as a mode of collaborative content creation which is led by users or at least crucially involves users as producers -- where, in other words, the user acts as a hybrid user/producer, or producer, virtually throughout the production process" (Bruns 2007, pp. 3-4).

As Trebor Scholz (2010) argues, we produce economic value for Facebook mainly in three ways: 1. providing information for advertisers, 2. providing unpaid services and volunteer work, and 3. providing numerous data for researchers and marketers.

The first one is related to the fact that our mere presence on Facebook provides invaluable information to advertisers. Starting with our birth date and finishing with our likes and dislikes, all this can be processed by advertisers to target their advertisements to users. The third one is in line with the argument of Thrift that the current age of capitalism is increasingly knowing and any information we post, in our case Facebook, can be sold to third parties and "transformed into profitable spreadsheets" (Scholz 2010, p. 245).

The second economic value, providing unpaid services and volunteer work, is especially interesting, as Facebook basically uses the labour of Facebook users for free. Scholz mentions that many Facebook users provide willingly their time and energy for Facebook use. The example is the translation application, where users translate Facebook into different languages totally for free. Roughly ten thousand people participated in the application which allowed Facebook to be read and used in many languages, besides English. However, also providing our data to advertisers and third parties, by simply being on Facebook and having 'fun', also constitutes working for Facebook and advertisers for free. Users by commenting, uploading pictures and 'liking' pages on Facebook generate revenues for the network, as it then sells their data to advertisers. It can be then argued that users produce surplus value and "engage in the production of user-generated content" (Fuchs 2009, p. 30).

Users of Facebook also provide data and content for the site, making it more appealing for use, through photos, comments, etc. One of the strategies employed by such corporations as Facebook is to lure the users through the promise of free service, who in turn produce content. This content, in turn, is sold to third-party advertisers (Netchitailova 2012).

Facebook is a typical example of a new service-for free model which saw a rise under informational capitalism.

With the rise of new information technologies, many theorists proclaimed a radical break with the past and said that we live in a totally new society.

Machlup (1962) and Drucker (1969) put an accent on knowledge economy, Bell (1974) and Tourraine (1974) say that we live in the post-industrial society, Lyotard calls it a post-modern society and Stehr (1994) names it the knowledge-based society. Thus, according to Stehr with the advance of the knowledge-based society “the age of labor and property is at an end’ and that the “emergence of knowledge society signals first and foremost a radical transformation in the structure of the economy” (Sehr 1994, p. 10).

This is externalised power I was talking about in the previous section.

Deregulation, privatization and moving to the service industries which are characteristic of post-fordist economy created an illusion that we achieved freedom and emancipation since we can now move freely between jobs and express our opinions on the Internet. However, it is still capitalism which operates on a global scale, taking on a more liquid and fluid form (Bauman 2012) and thus, more difficult to pin down as to how it operates. Global companies have often an office in one country, operations in yet another, while legal entity in another, usually for the tax reasons. This creates the impression that we are ‘lighter’ and thus possess more freedom since we can now move between jobs and even countries easier. As Bauman argues: “For all practical purposes, power has become truly *exterritorial*, no longer bound, not even slowed down, by the resistance of space (the advent of cellular phones may well serve as a symbolic ‘last blow’ delivered to the dependency on space: even the access to a telephone socket is unnecessary for a command to be given and seen through to its effect” (Bauman 2012, p. 11). The exterritorial power

that Bauman mentions is what I call externalised power, which has become even more fluid due to the advance of the Internet. We can connect when we travel, in cafes, in shops and now also from our phones. All this gives the illusion of being even freer and more fluid, however, while the Internet does give us the opportunity to connect, to share and to read more news, most of the Internet is in the hands of corporations who control what we are doing on it, how we do it and what is posted there.

As Fuchs argues (2008), the Internet economy is both a commodity and a gift economy. Knowledge is a commodity in a capitalistic society and is a strategic economic resource. Knowledge, when it is subsumed under capital, becomes information. Knowledge on such networks as Facebook, MySpace or YouTube is produced freely by its users, who are promised a free service by these platforms. In turn, this knowledge is sold to other parties by the owners of these platforms.

The Internet economy, according to Fuchs, is "characterized by an antagonism between cooperation and competition, between the information gift economy and the informational commodity economy" (Fuchs 2008, p. 209).

This antagonism is expressed in two ways:

1. At the level of corporations:

The new post-fordist regime transformed corporations, which increasingly operate on a global level with decentralized and flexible internal structure.

After the Second World War till mid-1970s Western societies were dominated by Fordist capitalism. This mode of development was characterized by such qualities as state intervention into economy, bureaucratization, the welfare state, acknowledgement of labour unions as political forces, corporatism and the system of Bretton Woods, among other things (Fuchs 2008, p. 106).

The capitalist regime of Fordism, "a system of standardized mass production and mass consumption" (Fuchs 2008, p. 106), was based on Taylorism with such characteristics as: division of the production process, strict command and control, separation of manual and mental labour, hierarchization and centralization at the level of corporations and strict regulation of the working day.

However, in the early 1970s the Fordist regime entered crisis. The rigid organization of work as well as technological and organizational structure reached its limit and the Fordist mode of development was gradually replaced by post-fordist mode of capitalist development. The new regime of accumulation was characterized by such qualities as customer-oriented production, teamwork, decentralization, flat hierarchisation at the level of corporations, networked units of production, the rise of transnational corporations, etc (Fuchs 2008).

The role of the state has also changed and was replaced by the neoliberal mode of regulation, where the state withdrew from all areas of social life, and the welfare state and collective responsibility saw an end.

Also the post-fordist area is characterised by an increasing importance of computer networks and global network organisations. Following the fall of profit rates under Fordism, computers and automatisations were pushed forward to increase profit rates and save on labour costs.

The current system where computerisation plays an ever increasing role is often called 'global network capitalism'. It is based on a transnational organizational model, where corporations cross national borders. "The novel aspect is that organizations and social networks are increasingly globally distributed, that actors and substructures are located globally and change dynamically (new nodes can be continuously added and removed), and that the flows of capital, power, money, commodities, people, and information are processed globally at high speed" (Fuchs 2008, p. 111).

Corporations in post-fordism have a much more flexible structure, where there is a new strategy which aims at accumulation through integration and a new spirit of corporate cooperation and participation. However, cooperation is often used as a simple ideology in order to encourage the logic of accumulation and the main purpose of corporations, even if they look very flexible, open and oriented towards cooperation (such as Facebook), is profit.

"The new strategies of accumulation are connected to the rise of new scientific models and concepts such as virtual teams, virtual organizations, virtual corporations, knowledge management, or organizational learning, which create the impression that post-fordist corporations are democratic institutions, but in fact they have a very limited notion of participation" (Fuchs 2008, p. 210).

## 2. At the level of economy as totality.

Informational networks form the basis of the productive forces of informational capitalism. Information in the Internet economy is on one hand a commodity which is controlled through intellectual rights, and, on the other hand, a part of a gift economy where information is free. At the level of such corporations as Facebook, information becomes a commodity. Users provide data about themselves and create profiles (thus, supplying information), which is used by Facebook to generate profit.

Corporations such as Facebook use labour for free in the new economy of capitalism. In the Internet economy it has become an increasing trend.

MySpace, Google, Twitter and YouTube all use labour for free in return for free access to their services.

Maurizio Lazzarato (1996) introduced the term 'immaterial labour', which means "labour that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (Lazzarato 1996, p. 133). This term was popularized by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri who said that immaterial labour is labour "that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response" (in Fuchs 2011, p. 299). For them the main purpose of immaterial labour is to create communication, social relations and cooperation. Knowledge produced in this way would be exploited by capital. "The common (...) has become the locus of surplus value. Exploitation is the private appropriation of part or all of the value that has been produced as common" (in Fuchs 2011, p. 299).

As Fuchs explains the Internet is part of the commons because all humans need to communicate in order to exist. But, as he continues, "the actual reality of the Internet is that large parts of it are controlled by corporations and 'immaterial' online labour is exploited and turned into surplus value in the form of the advertising-based Internet prosumer commodity" (Fuchs 2011, p. 299).

This labour which works in the Internet economy for free can also be called 'knowledge labour' since 'immaterial labour' might mean that there are two substances of the world - matter and mind (Fuchs 2011). Corporations using the

knowledge labour lure the users by offering a 'free' access but where users provide content which can be turned into profit through advertisements. "Hence the users are exploited – they produce digital content for free in non-wage labour relationship" (Fuchs 2011, p. 299).

Capitalism's imperative is to accumulate more capital. In order to achieve this, capitalists either have to prolong the working day (then it is called absolute value production) or to increase the productivity of labour (relative surplus value production) (Fuchs 2011). In the case of relative surplus value production productivity is increased so that more commodities and more surplus value are produced in the same period as previously. Marx explains it in the following way:

"For example, suppose a cobbler, with a given set of tools, makes one pair of boots in one working day of 12 hours. If he is to make two pairs in the same time, the productivity of his labour must be doubled; and this cannot be done except by an alternation of his tools or in his mode of working or both. Hence the conditions of production of his labour, *i.e.*, his mode of production, and the labour process itself, must be revolutionized. By an increase in the productivity of labour, we mean an alteration in the labour process of such a kind as to shorten the labour-time socially necessary for the production of a commodity, and to endow a given quantity of labour with the power of producing a greater quantity of use-value... I call that surplus-value which is produced by lengthening of the working day, *absolute surplus-value*. In contrast to this, I call that surplus-value which arises from the curtailment of the necessary labour-time, and from the corresponding alteration in the respective lengths of the two components of the working day, *relative surplus-value*" (Marx 1990, p. 431-432 & and also cited in Fuchs 2011, p. 148).

Targeted Internet advertising can be called relative surplus value production.

The advertisements are produced by advertising company's wage workers but also by users of the online social networks, whose content in the profiles and transaction data is used to make advertisements. Users also produce content for free for Facebook itself, and thus, provide unpaid labour, which Fuchs terms also 'play-labour' (Fuchs 2011). Users use such sites as entertainment mainly and usually in their free time. But without realizing it, in their free time they actually continue working for free for numerous Internet sites, by posting comments, updating profiles and by buying and selling things.

Thus, Facebook is much more complicated than a diffuse network with equal powers. It is rather a complicated diffuse network, with semi-egalitarianism as

ideology. Users can have their say, can have their voices heard and create all kinds of groups, but ultimately Facebook as a corporation makes the final decision about its architecture and users are not only users but also are its product and provide labour for free.

But this dialectic between Facebook as corporation and Facebook as a site used for fun (or any other purposes) by users is actually much more complicated than it can seem at a first glance. Yes, Facebook is a corporation which uses us, but Facebook's users see it first of all as a site of fun and entertainment. Even if users are worried about what Facebook represents, they still use it.

As the reader will see in the privacy section, users of Facebook have a complicated relationship with the network. First of all, not that many are even aware about the surveillance aspect of the network, but in case users are aware about this fact, their reaction to it is not a straightforward one. At a first glance, it seems that users do not even mind that Facebook uses their data, however, at a second glance (and I will look at it in greater detail in the section on privacy) we can talk about the normalization aspect of surveillance I mentioned earlier. In the current age it is considered to be normal that our data is collected. This is the normalization aspect of surveillance of Foucault.

For instance, I asked some users what they thought about the fact that Facebook uses their data and got the following replies:

"I guess people don't give a damn as long as they feel they are not being abused or mistreated. I did stop and think about it, but social pressure is much too overwhelming to really stop and leave this site." (Tim, follow-up on face-to-face interview)

And here is the comment from another user:

"I think they should be allowed to advertise to make it a profitable business...Yes, content privacy has been an issue, however, nobody else has made a product that addictive and I wouldn't consider switching" (Robert, online discussion on Facebook with my 'friends')

This is followed by the remark of another user:

"No, I don't have anything against it (advertisements). Because this is a tool that is entirely free, so why would I be against them having adverts? Because they have to make some money to keep the site running" (James, online discussion on Facebook with my 'friends').

It is interesting to observe that Facebook became such a monopoly and a 'useful tool' that users, even if questioning the structure of the network, think mostly of it as something which can't be closed as almost all friends are on it, because it is considered to be a necessity to have an online presence, Facebook is fun, etc, etc.

Most people to whom I talked about Facebook consider it as an important part of their lives. Here is one comment from a user which illustrates perfectly well, in my opinion, the debate around Facebook as well to why people use it:

"Facebook IS my life!

But seriously...Facebook is a major part of a lot of people's lives, even though many wouldn't admit it. I'm friends with most of the people I went to primary and secondary school on here, and were it not for Facebook I likely would never have heard from or seen any of them again.

A lot of people make the snarky comment that "you should be out making friends in the real world, not sat at your computer in your underpants...but again, I have made a lot of friends through Facebook with whom I have meaningful friendships. I have friends on here all over the world, so it has brought back the excellent tradition of pen pals, which I doubt many people would be interested in these days if it weren't for Facebook.

It is also an amazingly convenient way of organising things with, and sharing things with, all of the friends I already have. Plus it is socially normal to add people on Facebook that you don't know that well, say from work, and once you've added them you tend to find that you suddenly communicate with them more in the real world, i.e. at work.

Additionally, studies have found that contrary to conventional wisdom, people with internet are more likely to be involved in relationships than people without internet. Facebook, and the internet in general, has made it easier for socially inept nerds to make friends and find relationships.

Facebook is basically an amazing tool that encapsulates about a gazillion other internet resources into one format: email, chat, games, discussion forums,

blogs, tweets, etc, etc. It is also showing itself as a vehicle of 'political' activism, e.g. see how well Rage Against the Machine did in defeating Joe McElderry for the Christmas Number 1 last year. Also the Islamic fundamentalist march on Wootton Bassett. Facebook is becoming a genuinely influential community of political influence.

Go Facebook! (and no...I don't work for Facebook)" (David, online discussion on Facebook)

This was the most enthusiastic comment I received about Facebook (and the longest) but many points in this comment seem to be shared by other users. Yes, Facebook allows us to reconnect with friends, yes, Facebook is fun, and yes, Facebook gives the possibility to express oneself freely.

However, despite the overall enthusiasm about the network from its users, as I have mentioned previously, it does not mean that people embrace Facebook without thinking, without reflecting what it means and what Facebook represents.

I have already discussed some instances of détournement on Facebook where users actively participate in the cultural production around them. There are many other examples of détournement on Facebook which demonstrate that users (at least some) think about Facebook and make 'fun' of it. Whether making fun of some aspects of Facebook can lead to some changes, is another question, but some actions of users on Facebook clearly show that people stop and reflect about culture around them. One example is a group which is dedicated to art and has a special photo folder with references to Facebook as a part of culture and everyday life.

For instance, there is one picture which says:

"Do you want to make money from Facebook? It's easy. Just go to your Account settings, deactivate your account and go to Work!"

Another picture makes fun of the relationship status on Facebook. The text on the picture, on which a man and a woman lie in bed, shows their discussion in the following way: The woman says: "So? Is this it? Are we a couple now? The

man replies: "I don't know...I like this...I just...I don't know..." to which the woman says: "Well...Will you be my 'It's complicated' on Facebook?"

And there is another picture which shows a woman in front of the computer with a text which says: "Now I have 3250 friends...I can share with them my solitude."

These instances of the playful use of Facebook might appear as silly, but they have an important point. They show that people, in their own way, not only make fun of Facebook but also reflect on the issues related to Facebook: its association with a waste of time, its influence on how we view friendships and community, and the fact that any activity on Facebook (like a status update or a new relationship status) is taken seriously by our Facebook 'friends'.

The examples of playful interpretation of Facebook, like for instance, a picture which says: "I once had a life...when some idiot came and told me to make a Facebook account; or a text which says: "Spending a day on Facebook has once again fooled me into believing I have an actual social life" can be seen as an example of such 'detournement' on Facebook, as well as numerous groups which actually discuss Facebook as a corporation and compare it to the Panopticon (I have discussed already one of these groups and will discuss more in the privacy section). These examples demonstrate that users, in some instances, try to engage with Facebook in a creative way. It shows that the user asks important questions about his engagement with Facebook, and the above examples are the reflection of deeper issues associated with Facebook rather than just having fun and communicating with friends via Facebook. These examples demonstrate that users question the usefulness of Facebook and whether indeed the online social network is only a fun activity. It was also interesting to see that the group which discussed Facebook as the Panopticon was a public group on Facebook itself (Facebook and Foucault 2010). Ironically, the group was eventually closed, not by Facebook, but by its founders due to a 'Facebook's spoiler', someone who started to interfere with all posts to write a stupid comment. I will talk more about the phenomenon of Facebook spoilers later, but here it is the existence of such a group on Facebook which raises some questions. Can indeed users create an alternative discourse to capitalism

and surveillance on Facebook itself, and can it be then considered that the power on Facebook is also emancipatory, as was considered by Foucault?

These groups which discuss Facebook in a serious manner on Facebook itself are created almost on a daily basis. But apart from groups, users, as I described earlier, also 'mock' Facebook through their status updates and sharing pictures.

Looking at Facebook' power as also emancipatory, the user of Facebook can be then considered also as a 'craft consumer' (Cambell 2005), a consumer as defined by Colin Cambell, who has an active approach to the culture around him and participates in its creation. The definition proposed by Cambell "rejects any suggestion that the contemporary consumer is simply the helpless puppet of external forces" (Cambell 2005, p. 24,) but an active agent involved in choosing the culture around him in a creative way. Then the power within Facebook is not only the power of Facebook as a corporation and the power of groups of individuals to create groups to oppose the regime and status-quo, but also the power to be creative. Building profiles (while according to some categories as defined by Facebook) is then a creative and in a way a powerful act. Putting status updates and talking with friends is an act of freedom, freedom to conduct one's everyday life as one sees fit.

But, of course, the freedom to conduct oneself as one sees fit, even during spare time, outside of work, has its limitations in the age of capitalism. And that is why I call the emancipatory power externalised power. Herbert Marcuse in 'Eros and Civilization' (1956) talks about how in the current age people work in 'alienation' – working for long hours in jobs which are not fulfilling. "While they work, they do not fulfil their own needs and faculties but work in *alienation*. Work has now become *general*, and so have the restrictions placed upon the libido: labour time, which is the largest part of the individual's life time, is painful time, for alienated labour is absence of gratification, negation of the pleasure principle" (Marcuse 1956, p. 45). The attempt to escape the painfulness of labour time is in the time allocated to leisure, when the individual should be able to engage in activities that he finds pleasant. But here is where the most splendid contradiction appears. Leisure time in the age of capitalism is

controlled by institutions, it is not true leisure, but a controlled leisure. Leisure time is channelled into activities which are useful for capitalism, such as shopping, watching movies, playing computer games. While the individual pursuing these activities can even feel happy while doing it, this happiness is false happiness. "This happiness, which takes place part-time during the few hours of leisure between the working days or working nights, but sometimes also during work, enables him to continue his performance, which in turn perpetuates his labour and that of the others. His erotic performance is brought in line with his societal performance. Repression disappears in the grand objective order of things which rewards more or less adequately the complying individuals and, in doing so, reproduces more or less adequately society as a whole" (Marcuse 1956, p. 46).

Facebook, then, can be described as the ultimate achievement of capitalism in terms of controlled leisure time. Users who spend their time on Facebook (often, during their working hours) while having fun and 'resting' continue working for the capitalistic machine. While the Facebook user is in a way also a 'craft consumer', the problem is that the user remains also a consumer of capitalistic goods, by clicking on advertisements, by providing data for free and by providing content for the site.

And this also raises question about autonomy and how autonomous is Facebook's user, which is linked to the discussion of power.

### Self-Discovery and Autonomy on Facebook

According to Poe (2011), the more searchable a medium is, the more mapped its network will be, and the more social practices in it will be amateurised. Poe established the link between mapping and amateurisation by pointing out the innate human need for autonomy, and specifically the need to know oneself. If humans can use the medium for self-discovery and for the discovery of the others and the world, they will do it and will establish commensurate social practices. Mapping, according to Poe, facilitates discovery. In mapped networks, we should find 'self-help' practices and individualism as an ideology, that promote self-reliance. On the opposite side, the less searchable the medium is, the less mapped its network will be, with professionalised social practices.

The Internet, according to Poe is a very searchable medium. On it we can access basically any information and find answers to any questions. Poe mostly refers to the ability of the Internet to search for any information and talks about such sites as Wikipedia, to demonstrate his statement that the Internet promotes self-discovery, as on such sites ordinary people and not only professionals can upload information and participate in knowledge building.

The Internet is indeed a very searchable medium and is full of sites promoting 'self-help'. On the Internet we can find answers to any questions. There are some sites which are accessible by only professionals, such as academic journals or medical and law associations, but most sites on the Internet can be easily accessed by the public.

However, while Poe does mention autonomy and individualism, he does not elaborate on these issues in detail and does not go into deep analysis of his claims. The Internet is indeed a very searchable medium, but does it promote autonomy and self-discovery?

Facebook can be considered as a semi-searchable medium. We can find people we are looking for, but this does not mean that we will be able to access information about them if their profiles are turned to private. However, on Facebook we can access information on the issues which are of interest to us

by simply joining different groups and by participating in debates. In this respect Facebook is a very searchable medium.

However, does Facebook promote self-discovery and the discovery of the world and others? For instance, the discovery of oneself is limited by the categorisations of profiles on Facebook. This raises questions as to what extent we can be creative on Facebook and whether we are really autonomous on it. I will elaborate on it in more details.

## **Profiles**

Profiles are central to Facebook. They represent an individual and are the main point of interaction. Because of their public or semi-public nature participants are careful in how they shape their profiles. As boyd says: "Profile generation is an explicit act of writing oneself into being in a digital environment... and participants must determine how they want to present themselves to those who may view their self-representation or those who they wish might" (boyd 2010, p. 4).

The construction of a profile is a new thing for most people who join Facebook and it allows playing with one's identity.

"The social, performative, and fluid nature of SNS profiles provides a fertile ground for constant experimentation and reinvention of self. Profiles and one's identity performance change at the click of the mouse and are perpetually being redefined" (Zollers 2009, p. 608).

As one participant told me, creating a Facebook profile is like putting oneself across:

"...I suppose it's a new wave of people trying to create their identity. Their Facebook identity. It probably has become a part of what they are as a person which is quite weird as well, this kind of abstract thing. If it now contributes to what you are, that seems quite weird. It does contribute a little bit to my own identity. I put myself there across I suppose. Certain pictures that I put up or groups that I joined" (Amelie, face-to-face interview).

Identity is usually conceptualised as a set of attributes a person possesses (Faith 2007, p. 3). The study of identity moved towards viewing identity as complex and multifaceted. If the nineteenth century was characterised by romanticism, with such terms to describe self as passion, soul, creativity and

moral fibre, while modernism, in the twentieth century was more preoccupied with our ability to reason, our beliefs, opinions and conscious intentions, post-modernism looks at identity as being able to constantly construct and reconstruct itself, to adapt and to be multiple and multidimensional (Brekhus 2008).

In late modernity identity is viewed as mobile, self-reflexive, and subject to change. It is also social and other-related (Kellner 1995). Theorists from Hegel to Mead described identity in terms of mutual recognition, where the identity was dependent on the recognition from others. Yet, the identity in modernity is also fixed, it still comes from a set of roles and norms, "one is a mother, a son, a Texan, a Scot, a professor, a socialist, a Catholic, a lesbian - or rather a combination of these social roles and possibilities" (Kellner 1995, p. 231).

In post-modern perspective, as the pace of modern life accelerates, identity becomes more and more fragile. The whole notion of identity becomes a question where some scholars claim that the self-constituting subject is fragmenting and disappearing. Post-structuralists, for instance, challenged the very notion of identity and the subject, arguing that subjective identity in itself is a myth, a product of language and society.

With the increasing popularity of the Internet many scholars have been focussing on studying the identity online. So far most research has been done in online game environments or MUDs (multi-user domains), with the most famous works done by Jones, Turkle, Rheingold, Shields and Shirky. Their conclusion is that the Internet allows us to experiment with one's identity, can increase self-esteem and improve the sense of well-being in certain situations, when, for instance, for one reason or another, a person has problems to create relationships offline.

With the advanced use of social online networks more and more researchers have started to look at these sites (boyd, Ellison, Bargh, Mckenna, Donath), with the main focus on impression management, specifying that when online we tend to either better express aspects of our 'true' selves (Bargh, Mckenna, Fitzsimons 2002) or reveal more about ourselves than we would do in offline settings (Spears and Lea, and Spears 2002, Hine 2005).

Facebook allows one to present his or her social identity. "Social identity (is the part of) personal identity - our sense of who we are - that comes from our group memberships and the social categories to which we belong: our age, sex, race, religion, profession, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, region, social class, ideological persuasion, political affiliation, mental health status, etc" (Ellis 2010).

Facebook profile through its profile questions such as sex, religious views, political orientation, etc, allows us to think about social identity and reassess it in relation to group memberships (our friends on Facebook). Social identity is built in relation to group memberships in offline lives as well. In order to be recognised as part of the group, we need to share some common characteristics with this group. And we reaffirm these characteristics through social interaction, which is also the case of Facebook, as on it we interact with our friends and acquaintances and portray ourselves in certain ways.

George Herbert Mead (1934) said that the self is established through communication. The individual for Mead was a product of society, of social interaction. For Mead, we could only see ourselves in relation to other people. We are first an object of others, and then we conceive the perspective of other people through language and communication we become an object to ourselves. In the case of Facebook, we can look at our profiles as objects of our friends, but through communication on Facebook via pictures, status updates, profile updating, we take the perspective of others on us to communicate to the audience. As Van Hollebeke argues, on Facebook "the individual projects traits based on what others in society think they are" (in Ellis 2010).

Mead saw social interaction and identity through 'Me' and 'I'. 'Me' related to the social self, while 'I' is the response to 'Me'. When people update their status on Facebook or communicate what is on their mind, they present the 'me', based on socialization they have already experienced. The 'I' maintains the Facebook profile by selecting 'me' to project to the world and ourselves.

For Mead social existence and communicative identity is a three-step process through which the self is developed: language, play and game (Mead 1967).

- Language: through language or communication we take on 'the role of the other' which allows us to respond to our own gestures (form an opinion about ourselves) in terms of the symbolised attitudes of others.
- Play: through play we take on roles of other people and pretend to be the other people in order to correspond to expectations of significant others.
- Game: through game we internalise the roles of all others and form our own identity through 'rules of the game' (knowing how to behave in certain situations).

The three activities of Mead through which the self is developed can be applied to Facebook as well.

First of all, people become aware of intentions of other individuals through their actions and gestures (Ellis 2010). For instance, when we upload a picture on Facebook or put a status update, we communicate something about us to others. These others, by looking at our update or a picture, form an opinion about us and our intentions. By commenting on pictures or links friends 'project' our social identity back to us.

Second, we communicate our identity to others. By putting a certain picture on Facebook, we try to project a certain image and in general know the response in advance. By uploading a picture from our holidays we expect others to react to it in a certain way, by commenting for instance, what a great holiday we had. The profile picture also shows something about ourselves. It is the 'I' which chooses 'Me'. By putting a picture of myself with a cat on Facebook I try to show that I like this animal and that cats play an important role in my life. Here, we also engage in impression management, something I will discuss in more detail further on. We try to build a certain image of ourselves, but this image is built on how others perceive us in our social reality. This is the second and third stages of identity creation at the same time since we try to impress others and also engage in the rules of the game, such as uploading pictures on Facebook that an increasing number of people do, and commenting under pictures in a certain way.

And finally, the picture we upload means something to us, it means something for our social identity. "...this picture means something to the individual who is negotiating their personal identity among the available social identities. Identity, as it emerges in the mind of an individual, cannot be separated from social processes and interactions" (Ellis 2010). When I upload a picture of myself with a cat, I already know that I do like cats in real life and that they are important in my life.

Thus, on Facebook we engage in building our identity and it allows for self-discovery, as building a Facebook profile is in a way a reflective act. While building the profile we ask questions about ourselves: what do I want to project? How will others perceive me? What shall I include in the profile and what is most important for me in terms of how others perceive me?

An interesting feature of Facebook is that on it we are supposed to build a 'true' representation of ourselves, since it asks for a real person when building a profile and we are supposed to invite people in our 'friends' list that we know in real life. In this respect, Facebook invites us to combine our 'offline' and 'online' identity in one place.

Most people I interviewed give serious thought into how they represent themselves and it is important for them that the profile depicts them correctly. Previous research suggests that pressures to highlight one's positive attributes are experienced in tandem with the need to present one's true self (Ellison, Heino, Gibbs 2006).

Thus, Ellison, Heino and Gibbs (2006) in studying thirty-five individuals who used an online dating site found that participants try to find a balance between impression management strategies and the desire to present an authentic sense of self.

It has been often claimed in post-traditional societies that individuals experience and narrate their identity as reflexive and dynamic projects (Lüders 2008).

Today, the use of media to express aspects of the self seems to be closely related to an increased sense of control, while the self is also perceived as honest and close to a 'true self' (Lüders 2008).

On Facebook the construction of the profile gives people a sense of control over self-presentation and allows them to think about one's identity.

"...yet all individuals present themselves strategically, sometimes truthfully and sometimes not, to others in everyday life regardless of the medium of communication in order to accomplish their short- and long-term goals. CMC (computer-mediated communication technologies) allows individuals to execute a greater degree of control over the usually non-controllable features of their appearance, ethnicity, and gender in presentation to others" (Watson 1997, p. 107).

Tom, a participant, told me how constructing a profile on Facebook gives him a sense of control over how he presents himself.

"So, I suppose my profile reflects how I was using Facebook over time. In the beginning it was less socializing and more like a presence there. But it went from having a lot of stuff there to being very minimalistic and concise. So, I have only a little bit of music that I like, only a few films. And only the key things, like just one photo. It's like trying to put everything in a short amount of space. And it's almost like having a sense of control over it, like also a sense of control over what was projected there..." (Tom, face-to-face interview)

However, whether profiles do indeed allow for a 'true' presentation of the self is a question. There are three factors which intervene in the self-presentation on Facebook. The first one is performance, the second one is publicity and the third one is categorization aspect of Facebook's profiles.

### **Performance**

Erving Goffman in 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' (1959) talks about human behaviour as a performance, defined as "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (Goffman 1959, p. 32).

According to Goffman our behaviour is determined by a social context. We behave differently in different social situations.

According to Goffman, the performance that we display in different social situations is literally a performance, and according to him we have multiple aspects of the self which are expressed differently in different social contexts.

Facebook is a particular social context. It is an online context, where the body is absent, but where we present ourselves strategically, in order to give a certain impression of ourselves. Here we can remember the idealisation aspect of the performance mentioned by Goffman. In almost all social contexts we try to present a better version of ourselves. Goffman gives as an example the eight-year old children who claim that they do not watch television programmes that are directed for five or six years old, while secretly watching it. When I was updating my profile on Facebook while being pregnant, I tried to put books that I read into my profile that would show me as an educated and well-read person and would exclude chick-lits from my favourites, which I secretly read at that time.

Most people to whom I talked about Facebook wanted to present themselves as interesting, cool and amusing.

Thus, Peter, for instance, found it important to make his profile amusing, because it is how he wants people to perceive him. While Laura tried to project herself as an interesting person:

"...I don't know, it sounds really stupid but I suppose I knew that I wanted to write about myself in a kind of cool way, not really...it's hard to explain, I suppose it was sort of thinking of myself as quirky and interesting having these different interests. So, I liked writing about those, and I definitely did write in a way that would kind of, make me sound interesting, I suppose." (Laura, face-to-face interview)

Joanna, for instance, tried to reflect the fact that she is very comfortable with her body through profile pictures.

"So, I didn't really put a great deal of thought into my profile because I don't really put a lot of thought into my public persona because that's just me, what you see is what you get. About the most effort that I put in is my profile picture; I try to put something that reflects how I'm feeling. And if I've got a silly picture of myself then I'll put it up. I changed my profile picture recently - I've had the same one for months, and I changed it because this is what I'd been doing recently, you know, don't I look funny? Don't I look funny in a dress that's far too tight, in a bra that's three sizes too small, with my cleavage out for everyone to see and looking dog-rough? Because that was a fancy dress party and that is what I wore, isn't that funny? So I have a huge sense of humour about my physical appearance, and I quite like to play up to that..."(Joanna, face-to-face interview).

Thus, through a profile picture Joanna tried to project a certain impression of herself - that she does not care about the way she looks, is comfortable with herself and is a fun person.

Goffman distinguishes between signals that an individual gives and gives off. "The first involves verbal symbols or their substitutes which he uses admittedly and solely to convey the information that he and the others are known to attach to these symbols. This is communication in the traditional and narrow sense. The second involves a wide range of action that others can treat as symptomatic of the actor, the expectation being that the action was performed for reasons other than the information conveyed in this way" (Goffman 1959, p. 14). The latter involves facial expression, bodily movements, posture, etc.

On Facebook there are only signals that we give, so other clues like facial expression, body's movements are absent. This allows for more self-censorship as Ellison, Heino and Gibbs claim (2006).

Thus, on Facebook we can choose to include only the things that would show better, idealized aspects of ourselves. We can select the most flattering picture of ourselves, include only 'intelligent' books and powerful quotes into our profiles in order to project a certain aspect of ourselves.

The presentation of the self on Facebook can be done on numerous levels. It includes one's profile, but also photos and how a person interacts on Facebook via the wall or by using a poke, for instance.

When a person posts something on someone's wall, he or she wants to create a certain impression of him or herself. When, for instance, someone posts something funny on someone else's wall, the desire behind might be to present oneself as a funny person.

Finally, Facebook potentially mixes different social contexts, something I will discuss in the section on privacy. On Facebook we can have family, friends, work colleagues and acquaintances alike, and this leads to a certain

presentation of oneself, where a person has to take into account the collapsing of different social contexts.

As one participant told me, on Facebook it is like presenting an edited version of different selves.

Charlotte, for instance, is a teacher and she presents herself very carefully on Facebook.

"I tend to be quite careful with who I add as a friend and what I post. Because I teach and was teaching last year. Almost full time. I tend to be more careful about what do I post and with whom I communicate. A few students added me as a friend. And I tried to limit what they can see from my profile. And profile itself I didn't fill out. You won't see what I like, which TV show I watch" (Charlotte, face-to-face interview).

While Daniel, mentions the fact that he does not include certain things into his profile because there are different categories of friends on Facebook:

"I have been selective, because among people on Facebook some of them are really good friends and some are 'just friends', sometimes people I know a bit. So my true/big friends know many things about me which don't need to be on Facebook" (Daniel, online interview).

Thus, on Facebook we also wear a certain mask and decide how we present ourselves, based on our audience.

"A social network is a social setting much like Goffman's favourite example of a cocktail party, and in this social setting, the true self is hidden behind a number of personae or masks, where the selection of the mask to wear is constrained by the other types of people present in that setting. Goffman says that we pick our mask with the knowledge of those surrounding us, and we give a rousing performance through this mask. In other words, the socialness of the social network setting rouse us to commit to just one of our personae, and give a dramatic performance in line with that persona" (Liu, Maes, Davenport 2006, pp. 5-6).

## **Publicity**

The second factor when examining the self-presentation on Facebook is publicity, which is quite similar to the performance aspect of Goffman. On Facebook we present ourselves to different audiences, including high-school friends with whom we might have lost touch and regained it via Facebook. We might try to boast in front of our friends via profile pictures or languages we know. I noticed several times that people include languages into their profiles

which in real life they barely know. Also from my personal experience I know that I put only the best pictures of myself and also pictures of my family which demonstrate how happy and fulfilled I am (which I might not be in reality).

In her study of the Friendster, another social networking site, danah boyd (2004) was asking questions about the quality and truth of profiles, pointing to the fact that a personal profile is public, not only to strangers, but also to colleagues, friends, high-school friends and acquaintances. Because of this, boyd says that some people put minimal information into their profiles for the fear of potentially embracing exposure. "As a result, users may be cowed into a lowest-denominator behaviour, sanitizing the personal profile of all potentially embarrassing, incriminating, or offensive content" (Liu, Maes, Davenport 2006, p. 5).

Boyd also mentions another issue, such as the integrity and timeliness of social networks themselves. She says that the profiles are not frequently updated, which might give a false impression about the person.

### **Categorization**

In their article 'Unraveling the Taste Fabric of Social Networks' (2006), Liu, Maes and Davenport say that in our consumer-driven contemporary world, "we are what we consume" (Liu, Maes and Davenport 2006, p. 4). The Facebook profile reinforces this trend by 'categorizing' the profiles. There is almost no possibility to be very creative while building the profile as Facebook lists categories about how one should present him or herself on the site.

As one user complained to me while talking about profiles on Facebook:

"I don't like the idea that Facebook is trying to categorise everybody that's on there. There should be space for freedom content to describe who you are, what you're about, not what Facebook thinks you should be about" (Samuel, face-to-face interview).

While building these profiles we have the option of listing our favourite books, movies, activities. Based on the information put in the profile, we receive targeted advertisements. Here, the individual becomes a brand, a commodity, where Facebook as a corporation is ultimately interested in us as consumers.

"Consumer taste is thus heavily foregrounded; friends can rank and review

movies, and gauge their compatibility with others' interests. Self-identity is explicitly made a matter of one's assorted enthusiasms and fandoms" (Hills 2009, p. 118). Here the self is performed through a taste statement and cultural consumption.

But Facebook also introduces other categorisation parameters of an individual, such as education, religious views and current occupation.

Blau (1974, 1977) argued that society still remains structured to cluster homophilous individuals, where individuals prefer to interact with those who share with them certain attributes, such as beliefs, education, social status, and the like. According to Blau, people prefer to group according to nominal parameters, such as gender, racial identification, religion, place of residence; and graduated parameters, such as wealth, education, and power. Blau noted that social relations are frequent among similar, clustered persons.

Joseph Smith (1997) argues that on the Internet there is still a differentiation taking place with different characteristics like language and education.

Facebook, however, takes differentiation to a deeper level than simply education and linguistic competences. Categorization on Facebook includes relationship status, gender, job, religious views, favourite movies, books, and likes and dislikes.

This gives a rich overview about a person's offline life and raises questions about surveillance society, something at which I will look in detail later. Some people whom I interviewed, lie about their religious and political views because of the concern about how Facebook uses their data.

Thus, although profiles on Facebook are in their majority based on a real person, it does not mean that profiles depict correctly and truthfully the person who has built the profile. On Facebook we are building profiles according to certain categories, where the choice for self-expression is rather limited.

"On Facebook, we are encouraged - and in some cases almost required - to express ourselves according to certain categories, settings, and rules. Whatever choices we make on Facebook, we are making them within a framework of ideas and knowledge that we do not choose" (Dayle and Fraser 2010, p. 229).

Thus, self-discovery is limited on Facebook through the categorisation process. The profile on Facebook can give only a limited view of who we really are, and the categorisation sections on Facebook constrain us in self-expression. Our profiles and impressions of us by others as well as our impressions of others are limited by the fields in a Facebook profile: 'Interested in', 'Looking for', 'Relationship status', 'Gender' and 'Political views'. Facebook owners decided what should be the most important criteria in defining us and we are limited by their view of how a person should be portrayed. The boxes in a Facebook profile limit the possibility of 'out-of-the-box' thinking and try to impose on us a limited version of our identity which should be defined by the restricted set of criteria. So, even though Facebook does allow for self-expression to a certain extent (one can always express oneself through the box where one can describe oneself or through status updates), the possibility for self-expression is limited in the first instance - once we open a Facebook profile for the first time. One has to have a specific need to go beyond boxes thinking in order to build something more creative than a profile ticking the boxes of group membership, status and political affiliation.

For Facebook owners, there was, of course, certain logic in proposing a certain format for profile's building. Through well-defined categories, it is easier to store information and then it to advertisers. Facebook is first of all, a corporation, and Facebook usage follows a capitalist logic, where profit is the main driving force behind corporation's activity.

However, as was said previously, people have numerous techniques to try to overcome the problem of categorisation. Yes, self-discovery seems to be limited, however, even building the profile according to certain categories allows the individual to think about him or herself and present the individual in a certain way. There are also options of writing a text in the 'about' as well as the possibility to express oneself through pictures. Pictures on Facebook can play an important role for self-presentation, bonding and sharing and profile pictures also allow one to play with one's identity. As Lynne, a participant told me:

"Well, it does give you the ability to play with identities, and when I said I didn't put much thought into my profile, I mean I gave a bit, you know...listed what I'm interested in and this sort of thing, archaeology or whatever, so yeah, I did do some of that. But the ability to go back and change things is quite fun, again, like changing your picture. At one point I did use a picture that was one I'd just done with the iSight on the computer and looked at this and thought, 'Oh, let's play with it!' and I changed it. I embossed it or did something with it that put it very much in shadow, you know, playing with light and dark basically. I didn't spend much time on it, I just tried something and thought, 'That'll do', and put it up, but it's still that element of playing, and I see that very much in some other people's things. My daughter is at art college just now and her current picture is an image that she's made for art school and she changes her stuff periodically and my son changes his stuff periodically" (Lynne, face-to-face interview).

The example of Lynne demonstrates that people still find ways of how to express themselves beyond the proposed outlay of Facebook, and that people have different techniques to make out of capitalistic tools their own art.

And this brings us back to the question of autonomy. Does Facebook reinforce autonomy or not?

### **Autonomy**

'Autonomy' comes from the Greek, *autos* (self) and *nomos* (rule), thus, self-rule, which means living according to the rules one gives oneself, or not being under the control of another. The Greeks though didn't use this term for persons but for city-states. For instance, the autonomy of Athens meant that it was not subject to the rule of another city (Haworth 1986).

For persons, saying that someone is autonomous means that this person is in charge of his own life (Haworth 1986). "He is not overly dependent on others and not swamped by his own passions; he has the ability to see through to completion those plans and projects he sets for himself. He has, one may say, procedural independence, self-control, and competence" (Haworth 1986, p. 1).

Being autonomous means being a unique entity, being an individual.

Independence and self-control are two dimensions of autonomy by which the individuation is realized. "But there is a dimension of personal autonomy more fundamental than these. Independence and self-control qualify behaviour: one acts independently and exhibits self-control in action. But being able just to act,

setting aside for the moment any concern with acting skilfully is an achievement highly relevant for autonomy " (Haworth 1986, p. 13). The self who is autonomous is a competent human being, who rules oneself, is not dominated by others. But it is also a person who is able to reflect critically on his actions, needs, wants and situations. Self-control means the ability to reflect critically on one's actions, which usually occurs with the development of the person from childhood to adulthood. Thus, there are two levels of autonomy, one which is achieved by an infant as he begins to exist as an agent, and the one achieved by adults, who are able to reflect critically on their needs, wants and actions. Haworth distinguishes four main developments of autonomy. In the first instance, he talks about minimal autonomy, which starts at the second or third year of life and "involving the sorts of competence, independence, and self-control possible to individuals in whom the capacity for critical reflection is scarcely developed" (Haworth 1986, p. 55). The second stage, which is a transition stage, is where conscience is formed and "one is moved by the 'inner voice' (identifies with certain views and traits of parents or parent- surrogates) without seriously questioning whether one wants to be moved by it and why" (Haworth 1986, p. 55). The third stage is called normal autonomy, when the individual starts to reflect critically about his life, thus gaining critical competence, and becomes responsible for his life, when the individual has self-control, competence and independence, his acts are his own, his life becomes more completely his doing and therefore, he becomes more responsible for it.

The final stage of autonomy is beyond the norm and it is where one is freer from inner and outer constraints and has a more or less unrestricted critical competence. In reality, mostly the third stage of autonomy is achieved.

Being an autonomous subject involves having certain rights such as the right to free speech, religious freedom and due process of law. It is also linked to liberty. Liberty is necessary when one is autonomous in order to make free choices in life.

Autonomy can also be linked to democracy and power. The autonomous subject has certain powers, like the power to act as one wants, and the power

for self-expression, and autonomy is important for democracy building and democratization.

For instance, David Held talks about democratic autonomy and participatory society, which can be understood as "a society which fosters a sense of political efficacy, nurtures a concern for collective problems and contributes to the formation of a knowledgeable citizenry capable of taking a sustained interest in governing process" (Held 1996, p. 271). Autonomy for Held means that people should be able to take part in the process of debate and deliberation, ask questions, and have rights such as political and social, including the right to child care, education, health, and economic rights, including the guarantee of basic income.

Thus, autonomy is linked to the process of democratisation and power.

Facebook, as already discussed, can be seen as having a diffuse form of power. Users of Facebook have also certain rights on Facebook. There is a possibility for free expression, where users have unrestricted possibilities as to what they want to post and say, possibility to create groups and to participate in all sorts of debates, including the debates about the structure of Facebook itself. This encourages autonomy, as this encourages free expression and critical reflection.

However, on the other side of the spectrum, there is Facebook acting as a corporation, discussed earlier. Facebook, at a first glance promotes autonomy because anyone can join and basically do what he or she wants on it. There is no limit as to what groups to join, in which debates to participate and which cause to create. However, by asking for a real name Facebook already limits autonomy, as it restricts the choice of the individual in presenting him or herself.

Then, of course, there is also the issue with privacy. Facebook, by collecting information on its users and by selling it to third parties, violates privacy and thus, autonomy, as having the right to privacy is also part of autonomy. The classical definition by Warren and Brandeis of privacy says: "Now the right to life has come to mean the right to enjoy life - the right to be left alone" (Warren and Brandeis 1890, p. 193).

Facebook, by accumulating information on its users, violates their privacy and therefore, restricts autonomy. But this is not just the case of Facebook. On almost all sites of the Internet we leave trails, and many sites collect information about us. The claim of Poe that the Internet encourages autonomy is not necessary correct. It does have the potential for increased autonomy, as is the case with democratisation, but this possibility is limited by the capitalistic structure of our society, where corporations (and also governments) collect data on citizens and use it either for their own profit or by selling this data to third-parties.

Thus Facebook, acting as corporation, can be seen as an institution which limits autonomy.

As Haworth argues in his book on autonomy (1986), institutions by definition limit autonomy, even if in reality it is not always the case, as the possibility of autonomy is dependent on rules of a particular institution and its particular set-up. Even in the case of state institutions, which impose rules on its citizens, it can be argued that citizens by having chosen these particular institutions (through vote) exercised their autonomy. But in some cases, institutions can also limit autonomy.

"Institutions, for example, bestow roles, and these may be experienced as straitjackets. Even when the individual is happy with the roles he plays, he may nevertheless cast his eye over to other ways of acting he might be engaged in were it not for the specific limitations of those roles. As noted, by institutionalizing practices, the world has, as it were, made up its mind how people are to live in it: the individual, maturing into that world, finds space between what he would do with his life and what is required of him. It is natural to conclude that the institutionalized world per se is incompatible with autonomy and that the aspiration to be autonomous is realizable only by withdrawing from the world" (Haworth 1986, p. 113).

Facebook, acting as corporation, which collects information about us and sells it to advertisers can be seen as limiting our autonomy. However, as I mentioned already earlier, the relationship between Facebook as a corporation and its users is a complicated one and it is difficult to draw definite conclusions. Yes, Facebook limits our autonomy by invading our privacy, but users can be seen as also reinforcing their autonomy through self-expression, creation of different groups and organising of protests. The aspect of diffuse power allows users to

create their own things on Facebook, including protests and other forms of resistance. As Haworth continues in his book, institutions are actually neutral in regards to autonomy. Everything depends on how a particular institution is set up:

"Looked at it more closely, however, it appears that institutionalization is neutral with respect to autonomy. Everything depends on the specific way in which an institutionalized practice is set up. Set up in one way, it is receptive to autonomy; set up in another way, it limits autonomy" (Haworth 1986, p. 113.)

Facebook then can be seen as diminishing our autonomy in regards to privacy, but also reinforcing our autonomy by giving us a space for self-expression and deliberation.

However, how would Facebook act if people tried to organise an anti-capitalist revolution on the site? The site would probably be closed. Whether users do have any power on Facebook has yet to be seen. At this we point the diffuse aspect of power on Facebook is simply *externalised* power, giving us the possibility to express ourselves but at the same time exploiting us because we work for the corporation in our free time. The Facebook user by logging in Facebook to have fun, to connect with friends, to read news and to comment under the pictures is also an *empathetic worker*, a concept on which I will develop in the next chapter.

### Conclusion

Facebook can be described as being a very accessible medium. However, as was argued above, accessibility does not automatically lead to equal social practices and diffuse networks. The relationship between technology and society is a dialectical one. While some properties of a network can facilitate certain practices, ultimately the structure of the society in place determines the final usage. As I demonstrated, Facebook is first of all a capitalistic organization, with the main aim being - making profit. While some of the things that Facebook offers can potentially be good for society as a whole, such as reinforcing community, allowing people to express themselves, finding lost friends, having more access to a greater amount of news, etc (I will look at it more later), the good qualities of the network are jeopardised by the fact the network exploits the user, by using his data and by making the user work for free for the

corporation. While Poe argues that it is concentrated networks which lead to monopolisation, Facebook is a perfect example where a diffuse structure (at a first glance) created a monopoly. Therefore, in the case of Facebook, we can talk about externalised power. This is power which, at a first glance gives us freedom to act as we want but at the same time remains in the hands of those with real power, such as the owners of Facebook.

Similarly Poe argues that since the Internet is a very searchable medium, it reinforces autonomy, diversity and self-expression.

As it was demonstrated the Internet and Facebook do promote diversity and self-expression, however, they are limited by the fact that the internet is dominated by capitalistic organisations and Facebook is a corporation, pursuing profit. Its categorisation of profiles is done in order to facilitate selling information to advertisers and the whole format can be seen as limiting autonomy.

Users do engage with self-expression on Facebook through different means and numerous examples show that Facebook's users create groups and try to make changes in the society where they are living. However, all countries where Facebook was used successfully to promote a cause or even lead to a change in a regime were countries where capitalist West had interests in the changes which we witnessed. So, to what extent can Facebook be really democratic or revolutionary is open to debates.

## Chapter Seven: Facebook user as an empathetic worker

According to Marshall Poe (2011), the higher the fidelity of the medium (when it is easier to decode messages), the more iconic the network will be and the more social practices in it will be sensualised, leading to pleasure-seeking. Similarly, he says that the higher the volume of a medium, the less constrained the network will be, and the more social practices in it will be hedonized and value entertainment. Hedonism is pursuit or devotion to pleasure, especially to the pleasure of senses. Poe established the link between constraint and hedonization by pointing to the innate human desire for diversion. He says that if humans can use the medium for pleasure, they will and will pursue activities aimed at entertainment.

For Poe the Internet has a very high volume and two fidelity channels: a low-fidelity channel delivering speech, writing and print, and a high-fidelity channel carrying audio-visual messages. Thus, the Internet is a dual network. However, as Poe argues the Internet is more of a high-fidelity channel, on which sounds and images dominate, and where people use the network more for entertainment and pleasure purposes, and thus, according to Poe, it leads to sensualisation of social practices and values. He argues that the Internet is mostly used for leisure activities and it provides numerous entertainments.

In this chapter I am going to look at how Facebook is used by people in their daily lives, looking at the most common activities on Facebook. I will argue that while Facebook is indeed used mostly for fun and entertainment and that people derive numerous benefits from it, the Facebook user is also an *empathetic worker*, working for a corporation which uses friendship, having fun and human exchange for profit purposes.

### Facebook as a reflection of our offline world

Following on the argument of Poe, The Internet is full of different outlets for pleasure-seeking. There are online games, online music and numerous entertainment channels. However, although there are numerous entertainments to be found on the Internet, it is used for all kinds of reasons. Previous research shows that the Internet usage is dependent on education, demographics, age and numerous other factors, including the personality of the person using the medium. For instance Haythornthwaite and Wellman (2002) found that men are more likely than women to use the Internet to see news and use it for product, financial or hobby information and do more work related research, while women are more likely to engage into small talk on the Internet and use it for relationship-building communication (Haythornthwaite and Wellman 2002). Also, young people are more likely to use the Internet for fun than older people (Howard, Rainie, and Jones 2002).

The Internet is used mostly for three main reasons: social, work and leisure (Amichai-Hamburger and Ben-Artzi 2003). I mostly use the Internet for functional purposes and going to online banking is really not pleasure-seeking. Thus, the argument of Poe that the Internet is mostly used for pleasure-seeking might be an exaggeration.

Facebook, being a part of the Internet is also used for different reasons. It is mostly used to stay in contact with friends, relatives and acquaintances, but the usage of Facebook varies from person to person. I know plenty of people who use Facebook mostly for business purposes or research purposes, and some people use Facebook only functionally.

Previous research, however, does indeed show that Facebook is mostly used for fun and entertainment purposes. Thus, research conducted by Edelman, the world's largest independent public relations firm, concluded that most people use Facebook for entertainment purposes. Seventy-three percent of 18-24 year olds in the US and sixty one percent in the UK said that they saw Facebook as a form of entertainment. Fifty-six percent of UK respondents aged 35-49 said that they used the network for fun (Edelman 2010). Also Ellison, Steinfield and

Lampe (2006) in their study of Facebook usage concluded that Facebook is mainly used for entertainment purposes.

However, while most users indeed do use Facebook for fun, how exactly people use it varies from person to person. Andrew Feenberg and Maria Bakardjieva (2004) in reviewing the question of whether Internet can boost community, argue rightly that people use the Internet for all kinds of reasons and that more of empirical studies should focus on these differences.

People have different aims and purposes when they log in - it can be pretty trivial, like indeed watching a movie on YouTube, or pretty serious, like transferring money, applying for a job or having a chat with a long-distance relative.

The same applies for Facebook. Yes, the design of Facebook is actually aiming at entertainment, at having fun, while staying in touch with friends and relatives. While experiences of users in using the network are different from each other, many agree that Facebook provides entertainment, 'a break' from work and is often seen as an alternative to boredom.

The whole concept of news feed on the home page of Facebook when one logs in, appeals to our desire to gossip, to have an overview of all friends' activity in a fun, entertaining way. But how people use Facebook individually is largely linked to their offline lives, as well as personality. Some people can stay on Facebook all day long, some people visit it rarely and for some Facebook is a very important tool to stay in touch with friends and relatives. For me Facebook is important as I lived in four different countries and the site allows me staying in touch with friends from the countries where I lived. But I know a few people who do not use Facebook at all even if they do have a Facebook profile. For many other people Facebook plays an important part in their lives - it provides emotional and social support, informational resources and ties to other people.

Like with the Internet, Facebook usage also varies according to gender, education and even relationship status.

For instance, Hargittai and Hsieh (2010) found that gender plays an important role in the usage of online social networks, with women more likely to be more

intense users of online social networks than men. They also found that the usage changes depending on the living arrangements. Students who didn't live with their parents used online social networks more intensively than students living with their parents. Also women are more likely to use online social networks in order to stay in touch with close friends, while men engage more frequently in weaker-ties activities.

My data suggests that people use Facebook mostly to stay in touch with friends, but the usage varies depending on offline life circumstances. For some Facebook is just a tool, for others it plays an important part in their daily lives. It emerges that Facebook usage is linked to the offline lives of its users. This is in line with the previous research on the use of the Internet, such as the one made by Haythornthwaite and Wellman (2002).

Sebastian, for instance, one of my participants, uses Facebook mostly in order to stay in touch with one female friend. He first met her on online dating site but then they started to exchange mails on Facebook. Sebastian lives on his own and admits that his Facebook usage would perhaps be different if he had different life circumstances. As he says himself:

"...perhaps maybe socially in my life at the time I needed to have that social dimension. Maybe I needed to have that virtual friendship" (Sebastian, face-to-face interview).

During the interview Sebastian says that if he were married and not single he would not use Facebook in this way. So for him his Facebook usage is linked to the fact that he is single and perhaps feeling lonely.

For Joanna, who is also single, Facebook plays a very important role in her life. She compares it to the family she does not have and Facebook often provides her with an emotional support as she is prone to depression:

"...for me, being able to share my day with people is like having them live with me without having to share a house with loads of people...it's that intimate at times. You know, where I may want to tell people I've done something I can. If I don't want to tell people that I've had the day from hell and I'm feeling miserable than I don't have to, I don't have to tell people that I'm having a bad day. Quite often if I am having a bad day, I will tell people....if I'm having a really bad day and I'm struggling then I will post that I've only just got out of bed and it's two o'clock in the afternoon...And I'm feeling like I'm in a deep, dark hole

and I'm struggling, and I'll get loads of people who will remind me that I've been through this before and I will go through it again, and it's just part of the cycle of my illness, and that I just need to remember that, that I'm not stuck there forever that it is part of a cycle. And once I start remembering that it's part of the cycle I'll start doing the things that help me get better and help me move forward...and that's really good because for me it's a whole range of things...being able to have a really intimate relationship with my friends, down to talking about toilet habits and how often I have a bath or go cut my hair and things like that. Right the way through to social and emotional support from my friends when I'm having a really hard time" (Joanna, face-to-face interview).

Facebook usage also changes depending on the employment situation. Peter, for instance, started to use Facebook when he was unemployed and was using it all the time. However, this changed once he got a job.

Now, that Peter works, Facebook for him is a waste of time:

"Well, the thing is, when I use it now I mainly use it for the stuff that's useful so I do still go on it and enjoy going on it but because it's so easy to just go there and lose yourself and just mess about for two hours and then you think after two hours, 'have I actually even done anything? No, not really', so yeah, it's partly to do with wasting time" (Peter, face-to-face interview).

Quite a few people I talked about Facebook associate it with a waste of time.

Facebook is often seen as a distraction for boredom and a fun activity but which takes place instead of something more useful.

"How we use it is critical. People that go on there and just play on all those games that are attached to it, wasting their time as far as I'm concerned, and they're using up valuable time that they could be spending with their friends instead of doing that" (Richard, face-to-face interview).

Or, as Amelie says:

...I suppose it's a waste of time really. I find it really pointless, even if it is to be in contact with your friends...it's almost...not real, I suppose. It's almost illusionary...you know" (Amelie, face-to-face interview).

The fact that people often associate Facebook with a waste of time is actually an interesting point of discussion. Why is it indeed the case? After all, even playing games on Facebook can be seen as bringing some sort of value into people's lives: meeting new people, having a good time, maybe even learning something. So, why then is Facebook seen as some sort of guilty pleasure,

something which is better to use in small quantities and not admit to anyone else that you spend all your time on it?

Fiske argues in his book (1989) that wasting time was invented as a metaphor by protestant work ethic so that people conform to capitalist logic and work, instead of relaxing and having fun:

“Clichés are the commonsense, everyday articulation of the dominant ideology. So the metaphor found in such phrases as 'Time is money', 'spending (or wasting) time', or 'investing time in' is so much a cliché that we forget it is a metaphor, because it makes time conform perfectly to the Protestant work ethic – it makes a capitalist sense of time by turning it into something that can be possessed, saved, invested, something that people can have more of than others, that can reward the efficient and penalize the lazy. The metaphor is fully hegemonic, it is common sense in performance as an ideological practice” (Fiske 1989, p. 118).

The fact that Facebook has been banned at many work places (Telegraph 2011) is another interesting point. In fact, both of these elements of 'guilt' - using Facebook when working, and spending time on Facebook instead of doing something useful, reflect a capitalistic logic 'à la perfection'. On the one hand, while using Facebook at work, users try to escape work through pleasure and the distraction associated with Facebook. In a tricky sort of way, users while using Facebook at work, 'sabotage' exploitation imposed by capitalism by not working but by using Facebook. However, on the other hand, as the reader has seen already, users continue working for capitalism by providing content and data for Facebook, and at the same time, also experience a feeling of guilt: because, first, they think they are not working, and second, because they feel they waste their time. This is the contradiction of a capitalistic system.

Capitalism is interested in investing workers' free time into activities which can be viewed as pleasurable, but which at the same time, either should encourage workers to consume or to prepare them for further work. True liberation and true pleasure are very rare in capitalistic systems, and almost all pleasurable activities can be linked to a feeling of guilt. Freud described how in the current civilisation the pleasure principle has been transformed into the reality principle. Humans, according to him, naturally strive for endless pleasure, and especially when they are involved with some sort of mental activity. However, the structure of civilisation is such that it limits the pleasure principle by channelling it into

what Marcuse calls the 'performance' principle (1956). Especially, under capitalism, even the time devoted to pleasure becomes not a real pleasure but a useful activity. "The adjustment of pleasure to the reality principle implies the subjugation and diversion of the destructive force of instinctual gratification, of its incompatibility with the established societal norms and relations, and, by that token, implies the transubstantiation of pleasure itself. With the establishment of the reality principle, the human being which, under the pleasure principle, has been hardly more than a bundle of animal drives, has become an organized ego. It strives for 'what is useful' and what can be obtained without damage to itself and to its vital environment" (Marcuse 1956, p. 14). Therefore, logging into Facebook and 'procrastinating' there is often seen as something which is not useful, while in reality, quite often when users spend time on Facebook, they experience a certain pleasure, as the site offers numerous entertainments. As I discussed in chapter six, joining Facebook is almost a necessity, it has become a new tool to update about events, upcoming parties and what is happening in one's life. Marcuse, as was already mentioned, saw leisure as a controlled leisure under capitalism. When we log in Facebook we often enjoy using it, but even when, we still experience a sense of guilt as it is considered to be a waste of time. Moreover, considering that we also work for Facebook when we are communicating with friends, upload pictures, comment under statuses updates, etc, means that we constitute a pool of digital labour for Facebook. I call the Facebook user an *empathetic* worker, a concept on which I will elaborate further.

### **Flâneur, badaud and empathetic worker**

The concept of digital labour has been used extensively in the field of the political economy of the Internet with the growing usage of the Wide World Web and especially online social networks. As was outlined in the previous chapter, people who browse on the Internet, join groups, chat with their friends on Facebook can be called 'immaterial labour', with other concepts being 'prosumer', 'play labour', and 'produser', among others. It is based on the argument that the dominant organisation of the Internet, through its domination

by big corporations, exploits users' unpaid labour, who contribute to the content and create value when they engage in various activities such as browsing Google, sharing intimate thoughts on Facebook, uploading pictures. "This online activity is fun and work at the same time – play labour. Play labour (playbour) creates a data commodity that is sold to advertising clients as a commodity" (Fuchs and Sevignani 2012, p. 1).

Facebook is a typical example of a new service-for free model which saw a rise under informational capitalism. In this way it is part of a new trend where our internet activities are turned into profit by capitalists. The Facebook user is also part of 'affective labour', a term used to reveal labouring practices which "produce collective subjectivities, produce sociality, and ultimately produce society itself" (Hardt 1999, p. 89). This type of labour is part of immaterial labour discussed previously, but has the goal of creating affects and is usually found in health services, the entertainment industry and "the various culture industries" which are "fo-cussed on the creation and manipulation of affects" (Hardt 1999, p. 95). This labour is "embedded in the moments of human interaction and communication" and its products "are intangible: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion, even a sense of connectedness or community (Hardt 1999, p. 96). It is built on human contact where there is "the creation and manipulation of affects" (Hardt 1999, p. 96).

I propose to call the Facebook user an *empathetic worker*, a definition which takes into account of both the fact that the user of the network works for the network but also derives benefits from using it and experiences emotions while being there. In their daily lives when people log in Facebook they think of seeing what their friends are doing, comment on statuses updates, upload pictures and experience all kinds of feelings that we do when we communicate with friends, relatives or colleagues. I wanted to catch this aspect of interaction on Facebook by defining a Facebook user and situating it within the critical media/culture studies perspective which takes account of both the popular culture aspect and also an economic and political environment.

Marx and Engels distinguished between work and labour (1845/46). Work is a necessary productive activity which serves to provide the means of subsistence.

Humans need to work in order to create food for their survival, for self-fulfilment and as a community building. Labour, on the other hand “is a necessary alienated form of work, in which humans do not control and own means and results of production (Marx and Engels 1845/46, p. 4). Work is more general definition. Work is necessary in order to create goods and services. However, under capitalism work is organised in such a way that products of labour belong to the dominant class and therefore, work becomes an alienated labour.

Fuchs and Sevignani (2012) look at how work and labour function on Facebook. Through work we create consciousness and language. The activities then on Web 2.0/Web 3.0. which are “the activities of cognition, communication and co-operation” are forms of work (Fuchs and Sevignani 2012, p. 16). “Cognition is work of the human brain, communication work of human groups and co-operative work” (Fuchs and Sevignani 2012, p. 16). On Facebook users produce value for themselves which is creative work and value for Facebook, which becomes digital labour. “Facebook’ objects of labour are human experiences” (Fuchs and Sevignani 2012, p. 23). Users while spending their time on Facebook often share intimate moments of their lives with their friends, upload and comment under pictures, chat, have fun or experience moments of sadness and loneliness while they are on there. Facebook captures emotional aspects of its users’ lives and uses it for profit. Therefore, I call a Facebook user an *empathetic worker*. I use the term ‘work’ instead of labour because when users of Facebook log in they do not consider it as work, but think of Facebook as an important part of their lives and where they mostly communicate with friends. Work on Facebook reflects work as a necessary part of being human if we go back to the definition of Marx and Engels, because communication, community-building and friendship are the essential elements of the social aspect of our lives. The user is also empathetic because he usually experiences and shares feelings and emotions on the network.

*An empathetic worker* is a user of Facebook who uses Facebook for personal or professional reasons (mostly personal), shares intimate moments of his life on the site, while being exploited by Facebook itself. The user of Facebook is creative when he is on Facebook, because he automatically provides some

content for the corporation. But this creativity is channelled into generating revenues for Facebook.

Empathy has a broad definition but usually involves recognising emotions of others, caring for and recognising what other people are feeling, as well as blurring the line between self and other (Hodges and Klein 2001). All this can be drawn back to the identity stages of Mead, discussed in the previous chapter, and which can be seen in how users of Facebook interact on the site. This involves building of profiles, but also interaction of users through statuses updates, uploading of pictures, participating in groups, etc. Users of Facebook log in Facebook to see what their friends and relatives are doing, and experience feelings and emotions when they see the news from their friends. If someone feels lonely and puts it on the status update, we usually try to cheer this person up through a reply. Thus, we directly show that we care, but also other people can see that we care and this contributes to building of our own identity. We participate on the site *empathetically*, by reading statuses updates of our friends, by sharing moments of our lives, by commenting on the moments of lives of others. All this, however, is used by Facebook to create personalised advertisements. The Facebook user who logs in Facebook to communicate works for Facebook at the same time.

Gregory Shaya in his very interesting article 'The Flâneur, the Badaud and the Making of a Mass Public in France...' traces the making of an 'empathic observer' by the French press in 1960-1910 (2004). His description of how a French stroller, the flâneur became a badaud, a consumer rather than an observer of life and then an empathic observer or 'valorised badaud', can be applied to a Facebook user as well, who through the fact that he also works for the corporation, becomes an empathetic worker.

The flâneur, a term coming from the French language, means a stroller. The term was popularised by Walter Benjamin (1997) who made out of flâneur a subject of academic interest. The flâneur was a literary type in France, a man of leisure, who would walk across the streets of Paris and observe life around him. The flâneur was an explorer of life, a detective of the city. He was in the crowd but also outside of it, refusing to take an active part in any consumption, and

instead walking around solely for 'the gastronomy of the eye' as Balzac described the experience of the flâneur (Shaya 2004, p. 47). However, with the rise of the consumption which happened after the reconstruction of the Parisian boulevard under Baron Haussmann, giving way for more shops and creating a "visual pleasure for an eager public" the flâneur has become a badaud, where he mixes with the crowd and his individuality disappears (Shaya 2004, p. 43).

This was also the time of the rise of the commercial mass press, which Habermas (1989) blamed for the decline of the public sphere, when a "culture-debating public" transformed into a "culture consuming public", and where the flâneur gave way to badaud, a spectator of 'fait divers'. The badaud, however, having often a negative connotation in scholarly articles is not always a simple passive spectator, as can be seen in the description of modern life of Debord. While the badaud is certainly in search of sensational, he is also taking part in the surroundings, and this was exploited by the mass press in 1860-1910 in France to make out of badaud an "empathic observer", a part of the public that was defined by "sensations, passions, and curiosity" (Shaya 2004, p. 42).

As Shaya traces this development, it was a deliberate construction of a new type of observer and reader, to attract more curiosity to sensational facts but also "as a mechanism of solidarity of an era of social conflict and fractured identities" (Shaya 2004, p. 44). Describing a crime or an accident with pictures of people who happened to be in the proximity, was a way to assemble the community around a cause and boost participation in public life. Witnesses on the pictures emerged as not simply badauds, gasping with an open mouth at the scene, but as sympathetic and emotional observers who cared. This, of course, led later to the fact that press capturing on the popularity of 'fait divers' has become even more sensational, creating more of a society of the spectacle of Debord.

This interplay between the flâneur, the badaud and 'empathic observer', a valorised badaud can be applied to Facebook as well, as mentioned earlier.

Facebook is often used as distraction, as an alternative to boredom. Many people keep the Facebook page open to occasionally 'check the noise', or gossip provided willingly by their friends on the network. The fact that gossip is

provided intentionally is worth being looked upon, Facebook as never before provides a perfect stage for dramatic performance for its participants, and relates perfectly well to the observation of Goffman that "the world, in truth, is a wedding" (Goffman 1959, p. 45).

On Facebook people mainly 'front', they intentionally try to create a certain impression through their pictures, status updates, comments, etc. Facebook provides a perfect stage for instant validation, where members have immediate access to an audience for their performance.

It is not unusual for participants on Facebook to exaggerate their lives, make it more sensational and more interesting. Many put only their best pictures on Facebook, put status updates about beach holidays, parties and other events that could make one's life more appealing. This is similar to the experience of the badaud in France in the early twentieth century, when the badaud was after sensational experiences, provided by the press and the crime scenes. However, this badaud, as already explained, wasn't a simple gawker, he was also sympathetic and caring, taking part in the surroundings in order to gain more experience.

Rob Long in an article in *The National* (2011) describes his conversation with a Hollywood writer who put in his status updates that he was having a sensational and interesting life. One moment he was in a chic restaurant, another moment he was drinking champagne and the next moment he was enjoying his life in LA. When confronted by the author of the article about the fact that many of his status updates were an exaggeration, he admitted that he was just performing for an audience, providing content for his friends. Again, this can be drawn back to the rise of the commercial press in France, when increasingly it has become a habit to make out of ordinary lives something more sensational and curious. With the advance of liquid modernity, the trend for sensational exaggeration has become firmly incorporated into our lives, where our society has become a society of the spectacle.

This sensationalization on Facebook reflects in general the culture which "privileges the momentary, the visual and the sensational over the enduring, the written, and the rational" (Turner 2004, p. 4). Facebook reflects the tendency in

our society to be obsessed with celebrity culture. It is a general fascination with the image and simulation which perhaps makes Facebook so popular. On Facebook we are all badauds to a certain extent, watching the intimate details of our friends' lives and deriving a sense of pleasure from it.

Facebook provides both social contact and relaxation and corresponds to our desire for the sensational. Here, our own lives can become sensational and we become the image makers of our own life. Not only do we watch the lives of our friends, which relates to our innate desire for gossip, but we can also present our lives as we see it fit.

According to Debord we live in a society where "life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation" (Debord 1967, p. 7.) The spectacle for Debord "is a social relation between people that is mediated by images" (Debord 1967, p. 7).

For Debord the authentic life has been replaced by representation. "Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation" (Debord 1967, p. 7).

For Debord the importance of life has been reduced into having - we are driven by consumption and accumulation, and having has receded into merely appearing. Happiness can be achieved through a new car, a new house or fashion, but this is not true happiness, it is just an illusion of happiness. The current life has become the pursuit of commodities where "people's activity becomes less and less active and more and more contemplative" (Debord 1967, p. 34). This is in line with what Frankfurt's school scholars were arguing: in the current age we pursue false needs embedded mostly in consumption.

For Debord people became passive viewers of life instead of its active makers and mass media is to blame for it. We are dominated by contemplation of useless programmes about celebrities, where fame or pursuit of fame or having a new gadget has become the main goal of life for many people. Genuine relationships have been replaced by consumption of friendship where meeting with friends is accompanied by shopping or consumption. Instead of doing sport we watch sport on the TV, where sport itself became the commodity, with sport stars becoming celebrities and new idols. Instead of singing for pleasure,

singing has become the pursuit of fame and fortune as demonstrated by popularity of such programs as the X-Factor and the American Idol. Instead of living our lives actively and allowing for critical thought, we simply spectate.

In this respect Facebook can be seen as another spectacle. On Facebook we 'spectate' our friends instead of meeting them in real life. We are bombarded with advertisements linked to our profiles and posts, and here our life is becoming a mere commodity, where even in profiles we are driven to fill them in according to capitalist logic. Our profiles are dominated by the things we consume, watch and buy.

However, as was argued previously, many people try to resist the passivity on Facebook through active subversion and by creating situations, whose aim is not to remain a passive spectator but become an active participant. One of the tactics is *détournement*, discussed already in the previous chapter, where participants actively respond to Facebook's strategy by playing with words and through opposing some policies of Facebook with posts.

Another example where participants of Facebook try to be more active is through the creation of different groups, with some of them giving an opposing signal to the domination of mass media.

Thus, on Facebook, the resistance can be seen in some of the groups created on the network. One of the famous groups which actually led to some results was the group created in order to avoid that X-Factor single becomes Christmas number One, which has been the case in past years. As the slogan of the group proclaims: "We came...we saw...we downloaded...we donated...we conquered...we ROCKED' (Facebook public group 2010).

The creators of the group proposed that another single, from the group Rage Against the Machine, should become Christmas number one. The idea was to make a statement against the domination of the music market by big corporations and against the mainstream culture and conformity. The campaign attracted thousands of people and eventually they won. This shows that Facebook can sometimes be used as a tool against domination and that people

are not entirely passive when it comes to domination by the mass media.

On the other hand, would this group attract such a big interest if it were not about the X-Factor, watched by millions and being one of the most popular television programs? Also, how active is one by simply clicking on the like button and downloading a music hit on the Internet? The group did show that some people want to resist the mainstream, but these examples are rare and this group can still be seen as a part of the spectacle of the X-Factor.

Also if we look at the most visited and popular pages on Facebook, these are Texas Hold'em Poker, Eminem, YouTube, Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Michael Jackson, Shakira, Coca-Cola, etc (Facebook 2010, 2011). None in the most popular first thirty groups has anything to do with politics, democracy or social change. This demonstrates, once again, that Facebook is mostly used for entertainment purposes and that people on it are engaged in consumption of popular artefacts.

This is one way of looking at the use of Facebook - looking at it as a spectacle where people watch passively other people's lives and consume popular artefacts.

But another way to look at it is to acknowledge this consumption as an art of living everyday life and as creativity. By looking at Facebook as simply a spectacle or as useless consumption misses the point of what popular culture is and that people derive pleasure and meaning from things which can seem pretty trivial but are significant for them. The Facebook user is also an empathic badaud, caring for the lives of others and going on Facebook not only for entertainment but also in order to create, to share and to experience feelings and emotions which are not linked to the desire of the sensational.

As Fiske argues:

"Popular culture is made at the interface between the cultural resources provided by capitalism and everyday life...Popular discrimination is thus quite different from the aesthetic discrimination valued so highly by the bourgeoisie and institutionalized so effectively in the critical industry. 'Quality' - a word beloved of the bourgeoisie because it universalizes the class specificity of its

own art forms and cultural tastes - is irrelevant here. Aesthetic judgements are antipopular - they deny the multiplicity of readings and the multiplicity of functions that the same text can perform as it is moved through different allegiances within the social order...Aesthetics requires the critic-priest to control the meanings and responses to the text, and thus requires formal educational processes by which people are taught how to appreciate 'great art'...Aesthetics is naked cultural hegemony, and popular discrimination properly rejects it" (Fiske 1989, p. 130).

The point that Fiske makes is that people are controlled through work and continue being controlled outside work by what the dominant order judges as useful and 'correct' so that the worker is ready to go back to work the next day and not question the existing order. Fiske gives the example of pleasure, discussed in the chapter on power, and how the capitalist system tries to control pleasure by providing its own meanings which are supposed to be followed. Facebook is often talked down as a waste of time and as useless consumption because many people tend to use it at either work or instead of doing something more 'useful'. Facebook is often relegated to something which is dangerous and addictive, exactly because it is also a means of control over patterns of consumption and tastes. However, the fact that Facebook is also a perfect product of the capitalist system does not prevent the users using it against capitalism. There are many instances where users create protests and rallies on Facebook itself, and actually have 'fun' with the fact that it is impossible to control everything which happens on the network. On the other hand, would Facebook as corporation allow any serious rally against the existing order on its network? Something which would be seen as a real danger to the status quo? Probably not.

And this is why the Facebook user is a multitude of things at the same time. When we log in we don't necessary think about Facebook as a corporation, we log in because Facebook is a part of our daily lives, our friends are on there, and we want to see what these friends are doing and share what we are doing in return. Facebook user is also a flâneur when he or she wants to look at what is happening on Facebook out of curiosity and in order to enrich his or her life. The Facebook user is also a badaud, when he or she logs in Facebook for the desire of gossip, and finally, the Facebook user is also an empathetic worker. While Shaya in his article calls the badaud an 'empathic' badaud, I consider the

term empathetic more appropriate for the Facebook user. Both terms are almost similar, but there is a slight nuance of difference. Empathic is a feeling experienced by an empath mostly in order to show that one cares. Empathetic, however, incorporates an additional dimension, when one not only experiences emotions towards others, but also through these emotions experiences feelings towards oneself. It is recognising what others try to tell us on Facebook, but also sharing our own feelings in return, and building our identity as a result. These feelings and emotions are captured by Facebook to make a profit, and therefore, the empathetic user also becomes an empathetic worker.

However, it does not mean that all these feelings and emotions don't mean something important in Facebook users' lives. As was discussed previously, Facebook users log in Facebook for a number of reasons. These are important activities for users, which make a part of their offline and online lives. Despite the fact that Facebook is exploiting the users, one cannot deny the fact that Facebook leads us to reconsider how we construct our lives in a semi-public space, how it contributes to the question of community and how it changes the way we communicate.

I will have now a closer look at some of the activities on Facebook, which are often associated with 'wasting time' and triviality, and often regarded as useless. As we will see, the 'meaningless' activities on Facebook do mean something to people who use them, and in many ways, Facebook is a reflection of our offline world.

### **Facebook experiences**

Previous research shows that Facebook users mostly connect with people they know in real life and engage in social searching on Facebook for people they have an offline connection with rather than browsing for total strangers (Lampe, Ellison, and Steinfield 2006).

Thus, the primary reason for the use of Facebook is to keep in touch with friends, relatives, colleagues and acquaintances - depending on whom an individual wants to include into one's social network.

Facebook provides different means of communication among 'friends'. On Facebook you can exchange messages, chat, write on the wall of a friend, poke someone, hug, comment on pictures or a status update, upload pictures and send flowers.

Messaging on Facebook is not different from email, however, other means of communication represent new ways of staying in touch, sharing information, showing esteem and giving and attracting attention.

Take a poke, for instance, a function on Facebook where you can poke someone. It can mean different things. It can be a friendly gesture, a flirtatious act, as a means of attracting someone's attention, or as reminder that you exist. The same applies to other applications of Facebook, like sending a hug, or passing a test, whose result can appear on someone's status. The applications on Facebook can take all kinds of different meanings.

"Many of our Facebook actions are like this. They might seem to mean nothing, and yet be taken to mean something. They might seem to mean something, and in fact mean something else. The 'poke' for example. What is someone trying to communicate with a poke? It can be a non-verbal 'hello', it can be flirtatious, it can be a kind of game of poke-and-poke-back, or it can be a reminder (for example: 'Hey, I'm still waiting for the revised version of your book chapter!'). Or the 'Which Disney Princess are you?' quiz. When a young girl takes the quiz and decides to post the result, she may be attempting to project a certain controlled image about herself - or, perhaps, she's honestly hoping that the quiz will be able to tell her something new and guiding about herself. When a not-so-young woman takes the quiz, she may be being ironic. When a male college student takes it, he might be being sarcastic. When I take it, I'm trying to make my students uncomfortable" (Wittkower 2010, p. XXII).

According to Margaret Cuonzo (2010), Facebook represents a new form of communication. Contrary to a new vehicle of communication, a new form of communication is a totally new symbolic system. Text messaging would be a new vehicle of communication of a written language, as it is a new way of conveying a shortened form of the written language, however, the underlying meanings of the expression are the same as with the written language. Similarly, a telephone is also a new vehicle for the spoken language.

In Facebook's case, while some functions of Facebook like text messaging or chatting are simply a new vehicle of communication or an enhancement on

email, other functions such as poke, virtual hug, writing on someone else wall or status updates represent a new form of communication, with some of them going back to pre-linguistic forms of social bonding (Cuonzo 2010). On Facebook you can communicate with someone only through the use of certain applications, like sending flowers, poking or hugging, without necessary entering into written communication.

Margaret Cuonzo argues that Facebook creates primarily two new forms of social bonds, informational and esteem-related. For instance, we might exchange links, information about ourselves or show esteem towards each other through hugs or warm thought. These things bond us with each other.

In addition to informational and esteem related social bonds on Facebook, Facebook is also a new form of self-expression and self-fulfilment. The profiles on Facebook are for many a new opportunity to think about ourselves and play with one's identity. It can take many forms. The creation of the profile is the main vehicle for representation of the self, but there are also many applications and quizzes which permit to extend one's self-expression. As D. E. Wittkower mentions, taking quizzes and tests on Facebook can mean many different things. Quite often when we take a test, we try to project a certain image of ourselves. The same goes with pictures. We upload certain pictures of ourselves on Facebook, either depicting real people or something else, and usually the person uploading them wants to convey a certain impression about him or herself. Uploading photographs on Facebook is quite a significant act in many cases. It is not only the desire for the sensational or simply spectating, sharing and looking at photographs has many other functions, like constructing narratives, maintaining friendships and expressing one's identity.

### ***Photographs on Facebook***

Posting photographs on Facebook is a very interesting function of Facebook. As never before we can immediately share with our friends important and trivial events in our life through posting photographs. I can demonstrate my new hair cut to all my friends on Facebook, as well as share my impressions about my latest trip to Brussels when I want. When my son was born I uploaded pictures of him so that all my friends could see him. Many friends posted comments, and

it allowed me to immediately get feedback to the most important event in my life.

Similarly I look at the photographs posted by my friends, sometimes out of curiosity but sometimes for the visual pleasure, as a sort of entertainment when I want a break from work. But photographs on Facebook have many other functions and purposes than simply providing entertainment.

People take photographs mainly for three reasons: in order to construct personal and group memory, in order to create and maintain social relationships; and for the purpose of self-expression and self-presentation (Gye 2007).

#### *Constructing Personal and group memory*

Pierre Bourdieu argued that the desire to photograph is not a given, but is socially constructed and culturally specific. The evolution of personal photography and its rise in popularity can be explained by the emergence of a correlation in the public imagination between photographic practice and private memorization. With the development of photography it became more and more popular to make photography for collective memory. The recording of family life can be seen as a primary function of photography.

Personal photographs operate as a medium of communication, enabling shared conversations and storytelling.

It is interesting to observe how sharing of photographs enables conversation on Facebook. People often comment on the pictures posted by friends and family members. Sometimes, the conversation moves away from what is posted to topics totally unrelated to the picture itself. People often have entire conversations on Facebook due to a single photograph.

Some people I talked to about Facebook joined the network only in order to see the pictures posted by friends or relatives. The network permits us to show pictures to a wider audience and to have more impressions about our friends or an event.

Lynne, a participant I interviewed shared with me the story of her son's wedding and how Facebook allowed her to get more impressions about the wedding.

"...after I came back from there (the wedding), I did a lot of putting photographs on Facebook, and that was a very fun thing, a very wonderful thing because after Peter's wedding, many of the people that were there, many of his friends are part of the artist community and were posting their photographs and things and his in-laws, his wife's parents, were posting things, and their cousins were posting things and I was posting things. So, as this was all going through Peter, we were able to see, we were doing it so that we were all able to see everybody else's photographs and so I got impressions of this wedding that are not only mine, or of the people that I would have talked to at that point, but people that are friends of Peter and Liza's who were there and of course were taking different shots from different perspectives, and that was really, really interesting. All in all, there were several hundred photographs floating on Facebook (Lynne, face-to-face interview).

Thus, Facebook photographs enlarge our memory and experience of an event.

### *Creating and Maintaining Social Relationships*

Photos not only reflect the relationships but also help to build and maintain them. "Exchanging and sharing personal photographs is integral for the maintenance of relationships. One important function of personal photography, one that extends its existence as a material prosthesis for personal memory, is the role it plays as an aid to storytelling" (Gye 2007, p. 281.) When we show photographs to each other we also create narratives around them and it plays an important role in creating and maintaining relationships. Personal photography is a medium of communication.

We used to construct narratives around photographs by using a family album. I remember that while living in Moscow, every time I would visit my best friend, her mom would take out a family album and tell stories while having tea. This permitted me to build a friendship with my friend's mom but also was an important component of my friendship with my friend.

Under pictures posted on Facebook there are often comments either posted by the person who had put the picture on, or by his or her friends. Sometimes you can find an entire conversation under a single photograph. People remind each other about one's existence by posting a photograph and in some instances solidify the relationship.

However, whether posting of photographs on Facebook allows for the creation of friendship is a question, which I will discuss more in the section on Friendship. When people meet face-to-face, they see each other's expressions while talking, and these bodily gestures give a unique flavour to narrative. The gaze and expressions are missing on Facebook, and although people often post comments under a picture on Facebook - it can seldom be compared to a conversation which would occur face-to-face.

### *Self-Expression and Self-presentation*

Personal photography is a widely used mode of self-expression. Self-expression can take different forms - in the form of a picture itself, or in the form of processing and formatting the picture. By presenting a picture, which in our opinion, is interesting, we usually try to show that our view of the world is unique.

Self-expression is different from self-presentation, where we take photographs of ourselves. These photographs "reflect the view of ourselves that we want to project into our world" (Gye 2007, p. 282).

We can find both self-expression and self-presentation on Facebook. Often they merge into each other when the profile picture depicts our view about the world rather than presentation of ourselves. As Mark, one participant, explains, by posting these kinds of pictures on our profile, we try to give a certain character.

"...I agonised about putting a picture there, and for a long time I was just one of those cut out frames...and I thought well this is a bit sort of ridiculous, I should put something in. If I am going to be whole heartedly using this, then I ought to you know, come to the party as it were. So I put this picture in, then I sort of obscured the picture a bit; I made it a bit strange. Because I didn't want to put in just a straight photograph...And in the end I agonised over it and put a picture of an old man fishing, which is a photograph I took years ago, and that has remained my profile picture. I didn't, I felt having a picture of me with a cheesy grin looks a bit sort of, well I thought, 'what am I projecting here? I didn't really like that, so on the other hand, I didn't want to look totally anonymous, you know what I mean. I wanted to give a certain character, but not something too personal.'" (Mark, face-to-face interview)

Roland Barthes in his book *Camera Lucida* uses terms *stadium* and *punctum* in order to understand a photograph when first viewed. *Stadium* puts emphasis on the description of the picture, focussing on its content and meaning, while

punctum is more immediate - it is about what strikes you in the picture, its emotional impact.

According to Jeremy Sarachan, a Facebook picture is all about the punctum, "They create reaction in an instant" (Sarachan 2010, p. 52).

Facebook picture allows for much more spontaneity. There is no question whether the shoot is good or bad - any picture is good. People constantly update their profile pictures - showing their latest mood, latest dress or pose. Some people even take pictures especially in order to put them into their Facebook profile.

"Some of the photos may be a 'lucky find', but more typically the conscious decision inherent in Facebook photographs point to a continual attempt for a meaningful representational image. The photographer may consider the pose and physical movement, background, lighting and composition. He may also use Photoshop to alter the photograph. Facebook's constant flow of information demands repeated changes to the profile picture. A self-defined best image becomes obsolete within a few days. The need to experiment with new approaches to recreate and redefine one's air is a never-ending effort" (Sarachan 2010, p. 53).

Thus, photographs on Facebook fulfil several different functions: maintaining relationships, sharing something important with other people, expressing one's creativity.

### ***The Wall and Status Update***

Another interesting function on Facebook is writing on someone else's wall. The wall is a home page of the user where he or she is greeted with the latest status updates from friends (along with personalised advertisement).

The other day my sister wrote on my wall: "Miss Ekaterina Netchitailova and my little nephew!" I was surprised that she wrote it on my wall and asked her that she meant. She answered that she just missed me and my son. Now, why would she write this statement on my wall, which can be visible to all my friends and not send me a private message or call me if she missed me? Again, it can mean different things. It could be that my sister wanted to publicly show me

some attention, to remind her friends that she had a sister and a nephew, to remind my friends that I have a sister or she simply thought of me and using the wall was the easiest option.

The wall on Facebook is in fact a totally new form of social communication. It permits to publicly (or semi-publicly) show someone respect and attention. In fact even trivial things, like 'hi' or 'how are you' when written on a wall, take a new meaning. When you post something on someone's wall, you want other people to see it and the action can imply different things. You might want to attract attention to yourself or you might want that the friends of the person on whose wall you have written to see it. In fact, the wall is a public display of affections, attention, connections and esteem or anger - if you post something unpleasant on someone's wall (but in these cases, the post is usually quickly deleted).

Similar to the wall, the status update is also a new form of communication. A status update permits a person to share any information with all other 'friends' in one's network. Status updates can be quite trivial. People even used to laugh about them. As one user told me:

"There is a difference between people that post very, very trivial things as their status: 'I had an egg for breakfast', and people that post, well, a real friend of mine posted something about (name removed) which is an organisation that she runs, and it's quite serious material, and she was posting about a meeting and getting together and another mutual friend, in both senses, replied to her saying, 'Hey Kate, don't you know you're supposed to say something like, 'I had an egg for breakfast' on your status', and we had a laugh about that!" (Lynne, face-to-face interview)

People can put anything into their status reports - what they are doing at a particular moment, their thoughts, share a link or post a picture. Status updates, together with other actions, related to one's profile appear in what is called a 'news feed' and it shows you status reports and updates from all your friends on the network.

The news feed represents a new form of social gossip, and the opinion about status updates and news feeds are divided among people.

Mark, for instance, a participant, thinks that a person putting a status report might suffer from insecurity:

"This sort of rampant informality and incessant details about someone's life...you know the question, 'what are you doing at this point of time? I am having a party beer, I'm in the car or I am doing this, I've been to a meeting, I've just had meeting...I am not interested in. And I can't really understand why anyone would think I would be interested in those things, so in terms of how I empathise with it, I would never want to share with people that sort of detail which I would see as you know, tedious really. And maybe from the sense of lack, or to me it seems to indicate that the person has a sort of generalised insecurity" (Mark, face-to-face interview).

Charlotte thinks that putting status updates means that the person putting them has nothing better to do in his or her life:

"It's taking things a little bit too far I think. I tend to put status report. I mean, I put update if I sit at my computer and have nothing better to do. Or...if I have a particular problem...something is happening maybe? I think, updating, even on a daily basis is just that...you have nothing better to do with your time. I mean, maintaining a Facebook profile...and I have other things to do" (Charlotte, face-to-face interview).

However, for others the status update is an important means of self-expression and an opportunity to share information about themselves or topics which might seem as important to them.

People like sharing things with others and Facebook is a tool to do it instantly. You can tell people what is on your mind when you want and how you want. As Lynne, whom I interviewed, explains, Facebook can be compared to a situation when you enter a room and in order to break silence you make a comment.

"...a number of people then come back saying, 'I like this', and a couple of people come back with comments talking about their gardens and birds' nests in their gardens and that sort of thing. And the other people that I am thinking about when I posted the thing in the first place, you know, 'Paul would be really interested in this, Sarah would be really interested in this, the kids would be really interested in this', and then you get comments back from people you weren't necessary thinking about and you think, 'Oh, yes! Claire would obviously be interested in this', and respond. So, there is that conversation, the chattiness aspect of it which is very similar, in a sense, to if you walk in a room and there is a bunch of people that you know there and there's a little bit of silence and you make a comment about something and people pick it up and talk about it. Except, of course, in that circumstance it's a small group, and in

Facebook circumstance, it's potentially a much bigger group!" (Lynne, face-to-face interview)

For Joanna, putting status updates is a means to overcome boredom; it is a time-passer, an entertainment:

"Then there's all the day to day stuff that people do, like sometimes I am sitting answering e-mails and I will go on Facebook for five minutes and then I think, well, I really need a cup of tea, and I'll literally post 'a nice cup of tea' on Facebook, because that's what is going in my head at that moment in time(...) I want somebody to entertain me you know...I want somebody to actually lift the mood a bit and do what I need to do. Because you know, sometimes, you spend all day working on a project and then you think, 'oh, my brain is going to explode, it's going to dribble out of my ears, 'I really need a break from this, I'm bored', ' I need a cup of tea', is there anybody out there, and you look at your chat list to see who is online, then you can have a conversation with somebody and it can be completely irrelevant in the same way that any casual conversation can be irrelevant" (Joanna, face-to-face interview).

While Richard says that putting a status update has a cathartic effect:

"I find it really useful, it's kind of like cathartic....it's a release. So if something makes me angry, I can share it with people, so if this makes me angry, it makes me feel better. But it's good for the discussion as well because a lot of people that I am friends with on Facebook will want to discuss the same kind of issues and topics." (Richard, face-to-face interview)

Serge has a similar experience to Richard in terms of status updates:

"...two weeks ago I was getting ready in the morning and I was listening to the news and they were talking about Nigeria, Nigerian exports, it's the sixth biggest exporter of crude oil, and they said that the national body that is in charge of the Nigerian oil, NNPC - Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation - is facing insolvency and that rattled me, that startled me and I was thinking to myself, 'Where does the proceed of all the exported oil go?' so I immediately went online and I typed up my surprise, I put it up there, and before you knew what was happening my friends were contributing and making an input and saying what they thought. So that is a bit what Facebook is about. You say what you are thinking and people make their contribution..." (Serge, face-to-face interview).

However, do status updates have a real value? Does reading about what one of our friends has for lunch bring anything significant into our life? Is it just 'useless pleasure' or it has a certain significance, which is, however, denied because of its association with wasting time?

As Lynne points out, most status updates are trivial and the structure of the network is such that new comments immediately replace others, so that it is hard to keep up with what everyone is saying.

"I find it a bit cumbersome now. It was less so then, because I only had a few friends, so it was easy to see what they were all saying. Now, if you don't look at it for a few days, lots of things have happened to people that you don't know about. But, of course, much of what people put is pretty trivial anyway, so it doesn't matter" (Lynne, face-to-face interview.)

Status updates can also be regarded as a new form of communication, as never before could we have an opportunity to tell the world what we are doing at any given moment.

"It must have been very infrequent, throughout human history before Facebook, that anyone ever uttered a first-person, present-tense report of what they were doing at that very moment to a group of all and only friends. Imagine that in-person status updates constituted as much of your in-person communication as Facebook status update constitute of your Facebook communication. You'd likely be found uninformative, receive a blank stare, and rarely be invited to parties" (Fairweather and Halpern 2010, p. 191).

Status updates and all other actions of 'friends' on Facebook are presented in a news feed, like a bulletin saying what everyone has been doing. When I open my home page on Facebook I am immediately presented with the news from my friends. I see that Anya is flying to Russia for a holiday, that my friend Sam is single again and that my friend Tanya is preparing a birthday party for her daughter. News feed is "like a social gazette from the 18th century - delivering a long list of up-to-the-minute gossip about their friends, around the clock, all in one place" (Thompson 2006, p. 1).

This news feed is a new type of social gossip, and whether it is good or bad, we are naturally drawn to read what our friends are doing, as in each of us lives a voyeur. Liking it or not, most users scroll through the news feed and read the status updates of their friends. As Peter told me, if everybody does it, then it is all right.

"Well, this is the thing. I like to think that I am not the kind of person that's interested in gossip but everybody is. I get involved in it and then afterwards I think, 'Why am I doing this? It's not me!' But I suppose everybody does it, so it makes it all right!" (Peter, face-to-face interview)

Or as Mark says:

"...I can't help looking at things. I think I am a natural voyeur...But then you think...I don't actually understand why this material is here in a public domain" (Mark, face-to-face interview).

Indeed, why do we post things like what kind of sandwich we are eating and whether the view from our window is great? And why are we so interested in reading what other people are posting about their daily activity?

Experience on Facebook can be seen as sort of ambient intimacy, where we are naturally drawn to other people's details of their private lives.

This attraction of status updates, however, is even more complicated than that. It reflects the celebrity culture, appeals to our desire to gossip, provides entertainment and can also actually mean something important in someone's life. Taken together, they can draw quite a good picture of someone's life.

Narcissism? This is one possible angle to look at things, but in someone else's life this can signify something useful and creative, provide support and maybe necessary attention in difficult times. As discussed previously, we are flâneurs and badauds at the same time on Facebook, and our experiences on Facebook can be either very trivial or mean something important and contribute to the building of our identity.

Abrol Fairweather and Jodi Halpern (2010) analyse the psychology behind status updates and compare them to David Hume's 'benevolent principles of our frame' - which is our innate impulse to identify with the experiences of others. Hume says that we naturally identify with and share the psychological perspectives of other people and he calls it 'natural sympathy'. We usually feel sympathy towards people that we care about, and status updates coming from our friends provoke, on our part, a feeling of care. "In fact, status updates may engender a wider range of natural sympathy than anything Hume imagined; a kind of 'pan-sympathy'! A person can have an enormous amount of Facebook friends which, even if they are not friends in the strict sense, all present an ongoing possibility for natural sympathy with their status updates, and they can engage with them any time and as often as they like" (Fairweather and Halpern 2010, p. 196).

This is similar to the experience of empathic badaud in France in 1860-1910, but on Facebook because we usually deal with friends who are also friends in real life, interactions on Facebook become even more 'empathetic'.

In his article 'Brave New World of Digital Intimacy' Clive Thompson (2006) talks about Ben Harley, who shares his experiences regarding status updates. At first he found it silly. He found status updates pretty banal. One friend would post that he was feeling sick, another one would constantly update about which sandwich she was eating. These updates seemed to be meaningless at a first glance.

However, as time went on, something changed. Harley says that he started to feel the rhythms of his friends' lives like never before. He even started to look forward to daily updates about his friend's sandwiches.

As Clive Thompson says, here lies the paradox of ambient awareness. "Each little update - each individual bit of social information - is insignificant on its own, even supremely mundane. But taken together, over time, the little snippets coalesce into a surprisingly sophisticated portrait of your friends' and family members' lives, like thousands of dots making a pointillist painting. This was never before possible, because in the real world, no friend would bother to call you up and detail the sandwiches she was eating. The ambient information becomes like 'a type of E.S.P....an invisible dimension floating over everyday life" (Thompson 2006, p. 3).

Yes, reading about who eats what for lunch might appear as silly and insignificant, but it can also add a certain new dimension to such a trivial activity as eating lunch. Lunch becomes interesting, entertaining and even creative as some status updates on Facebook demonstrate. Consider for instance this status update with a picture of pancakes posted by Joanna during lunch hour:

"Pancakes for brekkie, pasties for lunch, salad for tea. Good food day" (Joanna, online status update).

Some people might find it as silly, as a waste of time, but for some (and certainly for Joanna), this is an expression of creativity, an opportunity to celebrate food. And frankly speaking, when I see such a status update with a

picture, I want to go home and make my own pancakes. What is wrong with that? These little actions (like what we are eating and sharing it with others) are actually small little things which often make our days more pleasant.

And many actions on Facebook are like that, as I demonstrate in this section. Facebook can be considered as a waste of time but also as a creative outlet, a tool for self-expression, emotional support and an opportunity to share something with your friends that you find important. Whether Facebook is actually the right tool to share things with your friends is another question, at which I will look in the next section.

## **What does Facebook tell us about friendship?**

### ***Facebook and Friendship***

Aristotle put friendship into three categories: friendship of pleasure, friendship of utility and the highest level of friendship, which is united by virtue or a shared sense of good.

Friendship of pleasure comes from mutual enjoyment of some activity - in modern days this friendship occurs when people go to a sport or writing club together, exchange books or watch movies together. The friendship of utility is when colleagues enjoy each other's company but do not necessarily go out together, or when business partners like each other. Aristotle says that friendships of utility and pleasure can form quickly but also end easily.

"Such Friendships are of course very liable to dissolution if the parties do not continue alike: I mean, that the others cease to have any friendship for them when they are no longer pleasurable or useful. Now it is the nature of utility not to be permanent but constantly varying: so, of course, when the motive which made them friends is vanished, the Friendship, likewise dissolves, since it existed only relatively to those circumstances" (Aristotle 1911, p. 141).

However, true friendship, according to Aristotle is much more than sharing pleasure or mutual advantage. A real friendship is a type of love and is built through time and through action, when friends show that they care for each other.

"Rare it is probable Friendships of this kind will be, because men of this kind are rare. Besides, all requisite qualifications being presupposed, there is further required time and intimacy: for, as the proverb says, men cannot know one another 'till they have eaten the requisite quantity and salt together', nor can they in fact admit to one another to intimacy, much less be friends, till each has appeared to the other and been proved to a be a fit object of Friendship. They who speedily commence an interchange of friendly actions may be said to wish to be friends, but they are not so unless they are also proper objects of Friendship and mutually known as such, that is to say, a desire for Friendship may arise quickly but no Friendship itself" (Aristotle 1911, p. 142).

What kind of friendship can we find on Facebook?

As will be discussed in details in the chapter on privacy we can have different friends on Facebook, we can have colleagues, acquaintances and real friends alike. While we can find all three categories of Aristotle's friendship on Facebook and among our own 'friends', does communication on Facebook reinforce friendship and can it help to build a true friendship - the highest level of friendship?

The opinion of users varies in answering this question. On the one hand, users argue that Facebook would not allow building a real friendship, because in order to build a true friendship, you need face-to-face clues. But on the other hand, some users argue that if not for Facebook there would not be any contact at all with some people, and that Facebook allows for a different sort of connection with friends, a sort of 'icing on the cake' - providing additional communication and additional information about friends, like their daily activity through status updates. The communication on Facebook among friends also raises a broader question about community and whether Facebook replaces face-to-face contact. I will look at it in the following section.

On the question of whether Facebook could be a means to build a new, 'real' friendship, users say that it would not be possible to do it via Facebook.

As Carol told me while answering the question whether Facebook allows building a true friendship:

"Absolutely not. It can help people who are already friends to stay in touch, and it helps you to get to know some of your friends' other friends (through pictures

and videos, and wall messages), but for the rest it cannot substitute for or create a real friendship, in my view" (Carol, online interview).

Or as Dan told me while answering the same question:

"My Internet-experiences have taught me that Internet friendships are quite superficial. Friendships made through the Internet to me are easily made and easily broken...They remain like that until those people really can meet and talk in real life. Only then can this friendly relationship possibly become friendship, in my view. When real life is concerned, then Facebook does help to remain in touch and in this sense it may not immediately improve relationship, but it does help to maintain friendship with some people who went out of reach" (Dan, online interview).

Charlotte, another participant told me that Facebook facilitates communication but does not deepen relationships:

"I don't think that it contributes on its own to deepen relationships. I think what it does is facilitating communication between you. And I think that if you ever speak to someone only on Facebook and it's the only way of communication you would think of, I don't personally feel that it would contribute to form a deep relationship. Unless, it's circumstances that caused the lack of other communication. But I think that if you don't want to phone somebody or meet them face-to-face, that suggests that you don't want a deep relationship with them" (Charlotte, face-to-face interview).

It emerges from the interviews that while on Facebook it would not be possible to create new, meaningful friendships, it does allow maintaining contact with friends who are already friends in offline life.

However, almost all participants argue that Facebook facilitates to create and maintain what we call 'weak ties', which is in line with the previous research conducted by Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007).

Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe in "The Benefits of Facebook 'Friends': Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites" (2007), find that Facebook usage is linked to an increase of social capital, and especially bridging social capital, in other words - weak ties.

Social capital refers to the resources accumulated through the relationships among people. It allows a person to draw on resources from other members of the networks to which the person belongs. These resources can be useful information, help in finding a job, personal relationships, the capacity to organize groups, etc.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define social capital as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 119).

Putnam in "Bowling Alone" (2000) distinguishes between bridging and bonding social capital. Bridging social capital refers to 'weak' ties, acquaintances as opposed to close friends, and which are important for useful information and less so for emotional support. Bonding social capital refers more to emotionally close relationships, such as family and close friends.

According to Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007), online social networks are beneficial in building bridging social capital.

"Because online relationships may be supported by technologies like distribution lists, photo directories, and search capabilities..., it is possible that new forms of social capital and relationship building will occur in online social network sites. Bridging social capital might be augmented by such sites, which support loose social ties, allowing users to create and maintain larger, diffuse networks of relationships from which they could potentially draw resources" (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe 2007, p. 4).

It seems that Facebook is indeed very helpful in maintaining contact with people with whom otherwise there would be no contact. A few people I interviewed mentioned that if with close friends the means of communication do not necessary change (people apparently still prefer to use phones or meet face-to-face) Facebook is instrumental in maintaining weak ties.

Consider what one user told me on this account:

"With all my good friends who I've known for a long time, we still use our phones more to communicate but then with friends who I know fairly well, but previously I see them only by chance and then bump into them at a party or they are with one of my other friends and I see them and I might have their number on my phone but never think to ring them, for friends like that, Facebook is really useful because it makes it easier to contact people who you don't see as often. I wouldn't say that it has made the friendship group wider but it makes it easier to communicate with people who are a bit further away in the friendship group. And our friendship group is pretty wide anyway, well, it is Sheffield, where I think everybody knows everybody really! So there are people that I've known for years who I never really have any contact with but now I do have contact with them because of Facebook" (Peter, face-to-face interview).

Facebook is also very useful in maintaining contact with people whom we meet while travelling. Before Facebook we would easily lose touch with new acquaintances met in other countries, but thanks to online social networking we can stay in touch with people from different countries and see what they are up to.

"...one of the main reasons why I joined Facebook is because I became very good friends with a guy called Philip, who lives in Holland, and it is very difficult to get in contact with him, he never answers his mails and you know, it is expensive ringing him and even if it wasn't that expensive, I wouldn't have any particular interest in ringing him every month or whatever, but I can see on Facebook what he has been doing. Because he makes films, he is an amateur film maker and so I know that this year, at one of the festivals in Holland, he had one of his films projected on the big screen and five or six years ago, if we'd have met before Facebook existed, it's unlikely that he'd have rung me and said, 'Hey Peter, one of my films is being shown!' I'd have probably never known, so it's nice to know that can I say, 'Well done.' So it is a really good thing for just being able to stay in contact with people like that who you don't see very often..." (Peter, face-to-face interview)

As mentioned previously weak contacts or bridging social capital can be instrumental in certain situations. I found my first job not because of my knowledge but because I knew someone who recommended me to his dad who owned a company where I secured a job. I found a very nice apartment to rent in Brussels through a friend of a friend, and if I decide to go to Cannes I know that I can contact an acquaintance on Facebook to ask him to show me around the place.

In this respect, Facebook seems to be a 'bank of bringing social capital'. Robert Putnam compares social capital to the favour bank. I will do this for you, if you do this for me, but sometimes, the favour is done as generalised reciprocity. "I'll do this for you without expecting anything specific back from you, in the confident expectation that someone else will do something for me down the road" (Putnam 2000, p. 21).

Putnam says that a society characterised by generalised reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society.

"If we don't have to balance every exchange instantly, we can get a lot more accomplished. Trustworthiness lubricates social life. Frequent interaction among

a diverse set of people tends to produce a norm of generalised reciprocity" (Putnam 2000, p. 21).

An acquaintance I have among friends on Facebook once asked me to help with her business venture in Russia. I did not ask for anything in return, but I might ask another acquaintance on Facebook who lives in Paris to help to find a hotel, or even ask her to be able to stay at her place. If I did not have a Facebook account I probably would not be able to do so. Facebook, thus, adds to my social capital and gives me an 'overview' of my strong and weak ties in one place, which can be very useful in my life.

As Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) argue, social capital can be very useful on an individual level:

"For individuals, social capital allows a person to draw on resources from other members of the network to which he or she belongs. These resources can take the form of useful information, personal relationships, or the capacity to organize groups...Access to individuals outside one's close circle provides access to non-redundant information, resulting in benefits such as employment connections..." (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe 2007, p. 3).

As Peter told me during the interview, one of the main reasons he joined was in order to be able to contact people if he would go to another town or country.

"...for instance, I am going to another country where somebody I know lives and if I haven't got the credit on my phone to ring them then I can contact them on Facebook and say, 'Are you going to be around this week, shall we meet up?' and that sort of thing" (Peter, face-to-face interview).

As Tom, a student, told me when asked whether he would miss out on things in case he stopped using Facebook:

"Now...I don't know. I don't know if I would actively miss out on something. I just think that there would be small things that I wouldn't get. As I said, I might not have been able to maintain contact with people professionally as well as I can. And it's a good reminder that you exist, or they might forget after having met you once. It's a kind of way...kind of weak social contact. It's more like people see you, rather than it being an actual communication" (Tom, face-to-face interview).

As Jenny Ryan (2006) mentions in her article 'Bridging the Virtual and the Real: Identity and Community on Facebook', superficial relationships can be helpful in obtaining knowledge and make life more fun. 'Superficial relationships' can help

us on many occasions, increase our knowledge and capacity to do things, as well as make our lives simply more sociable.

However, while increased bridging capital can be seen as a positive thing, it can also promote what Giddens calls 'pure relationships' (1992), characterised by the intrinsic satisfaction that they offer and maintained only when they offer enough satisfaction.

"The consequent vision of a highly discursive, disembodied late modern intimacy based on talk rather than passion, negotiation rather than commitment, and the advancement of the self rather than the development of the couple suggest that the Internet is uniquely placed to facilitate such relationships" (Hardy 2002, p. 274).

Here we can remember the saying of Bauman about 'postmodern tourists' (1996), where individuals use the technological possibilities available to them for increasing their experience and pleasure, yet who do so by protecting themselves from any sense of moral responsibility for the other.

We can remember the story of Simone Black who killed herself over Christmas 2010.

Before taking pills which would end her life, Simone put the following message on Facebook: "Took all my pills be dead soon so bye bye everyone."

Simone had 1,082 'friends' on the network and none of them offered help. Instead her 'friends' responded with cruel messages, such as, "She ODs (overdoses) all the time and she lies", "She does it all the time, takes all her pills. She's not a kid any more", "She has a choice and taking pills over a relationship is not a good enough reason" (The Telegraph 2011).

This story demonstrates that 'friends' on Facebook are not necessary 'friends' in real life, but it also shows the fact that a person can be bullied by 'friends' on the network.

Thus, while Facebook offers the possibility to increase the amount of connections, it does not necessarily lead to any meaningful friendship creation and contacts are often maintained just as a window dressing, in order to display

connections publicly (boyd, 2007, 2010) and simply for a reason to have them rather than in order to communicate.

As one participant told me:

"...I ended up inviting D K who is the president of the group (name withheld for privacy reasons), after we had a conference in July, within the country. And you know, I actually got to meet him, and we sort of met personally, and after that I thought yeah maybe it would be good to invite him because he has always got this group of people that you already know, and he was in there. So I invited him and a couple of other people who I work with or have collaborated with... So that person also became a friend, but we've never, interestingly, really had a conversation on Facebook. We've never really had an exchange, we are simply friends. So we can have a look at the other people's interesting intro. And that's as far as it goes. Neither of us have made any comments on it, so I wonder what is the point really. And another person who asked me to, who is also member of this group, asked me to become a friend because she wanted to practice her English, as she's from Argentina. And we had a couple of conversations and commentaries, but that was about six months ago and there has been no communication at all." (Mark, face-to-face interview)

Or as Laura told me:

"I suppose, I've used it to get back in touch with people from school, or friends from the past who I've lost touch with. So in that sense it's been quite nice to be able to find these people who I thought I'd lost, but then on the other hand once I'd got in touch with them, quite often we didn't have that much to say to each other so it seemed a bit sad" (Laura, face-to-face interview).

In total I have 250 friends, but I only really know very well perhaps half of them. The rest are just there as 'my friends' as some sort of public display and I often wonder myself whether there is a point in having these connections. From what the participants told me, many have connected with friends from high school or invited former colleagues without actually having any conversation or exchange afterwards. While it might increase the impression about one's social capital, it does not necessary lead to any meaningful friendship formation.

As Cameron Marlow (2009) argues there is a theoretical cognitive limit to the number of people with whom one can maintain stable social relationships.

"Humans may be advertising themselves more efficiently. But they still have the same small circles of intimacy as ever" (Inside Facebook blog 2009).

So, we can say that friendship on Facebook is not the same as real friendship. Rather it is a sort of 'ambient intimacy', where we are constantly reminded about each other's existence without it leading to true friendship. In fact, we can talk about a new phenomenon, 'Facebook friend' where friends exist more for pleasure and utility while the highest form of friendship still requires meeting face-to-face and more commitment to each other in real life.

But as seen previously Facebook does open a new channel of communication. It allows us to maintain weak ties, reconnect with old friends and can be very useful in certain situations.

Mina, for instance, told me that Facebook actually does give the impression of certain closeness with people who are 'friends' on Facebook but more acquaintances in offline life.

"...for example, yesterday or the day before, we decided to go to Denmark at the end of April. So, I have a friend in Denmark; I met her here last year, she came for a semester and then went back, and Facebook is the best way to contact her. So I wrote to her, 'I'm coming to Denmark, are you available at the end of April?' and I realised that I had other friends from university in Denmark because I saw it on Facebook again, I mean, I don't have regular communication with them because I see them on Facebook and we make comments on each other's statuses or photos, I know that they are in Denmark, so I also sent them an email saying, 'Oh, we are coming, will you be available to meet with us?' and of course, sometimes I use it to communicate with people I know but they are two separate things actually. One is to observe the people and have no communication but the other is to keep in touch with my friends who, for example, I don't phone or I don't mail. But Facebook opens a different way of keeping in touch with people who aren't close to have regular communication with but yet...there is a closeness I want to, how to say it? I don't know!" (Mina, face-to-face interview)

While Lynne argued during the interview that Facebook gives the possibility of more contact with people and told me little bit about her mother and how Facebook could facilitate maintaining contact with her friends:

"It's hard to tell to what extent people are communicating less, basically, because I think we tend to have an impression, in the past, of people being constantly part of social networks and constantly talking, but an awful lot of people weren't, or had very limited contacts, and Facebook gives them more of that. Now, I'm thinking of things like - a bit of personal history here...My parents

moved to Dundee from Glasgow. They were both in their early twenties at the time. They had no family and no friends in Dundee. Now, obviously, they accrued some family and some friends, and yet there's a sense in which they were always outsiders because they weren't part of any family networks there, and the networks they made were through, well the classic one is they were friends with the parents of the children that their children had made friends with, you know, that they've met at the school gates and that sort of thing. But my mother, of course, always maintained contact with her siblings and their children in Glasgow but this was though occasional telephone calls and occasional visits, so there isn't really a tight social network there, or if there is, she's removed from it. And she didn't talk about sometimes being lonely. She was a wonderful letter writer! Her networks were done very much through writing letters, occasional visits and phone calls. I don't know what she'd have made of Facebook, but if she'd had Facebook at the time that she left Glasgow, you know, there's the ability to share things on there, particularly photographs and that sort of thing, that was lacking for her..." (Lynne, face-to-face interview)

And while some people find it almost pointless to reconnect with some old friends if there is no contact afterwards, other people think the opposite. Like Serge:

"It's social life and fun too. I mean, you have a laugh and you reconnect with your friends, it's very, very important. You know, since I joined last year I have never been the same. I hooked up with all my friends, I can't believe it! And these are friends that I've not spoken to, I don't know anything about them, there are high school friends that I saw twenty-something years ago, and eureka! They're there like that! So, it's wonderful!" (Serge, face-to-face interview)

In fact, as was argued before, people have different experiences and opinions related to Facebook, and it is difficult to generalise its usage. Everyone has a different story about Facebook and a different pattern of using it. For some it is an intimate family, for some it is just a tool, and for some it is an opportunity to learn more about one's friends. And that is why the Facebook user is an empathetic user. It is the user whose Facebook activity adds an important dimension into his life, and while the user also works for the corporations and becomes an *empathetic worker*, we need to recognise that Facebook plays a major social role in our lives.

The question of friendship on Facebook also raises the question about community and whether Facebook has the tendency to replace face-to-face

contact. As we will see in the next section, these questions are impossible to answer definitely, as every person is different and everyone has a different experience in relation to Facebook. However, most users agree about the fact that Facebook does not replace face-to-face contact.

### ***Facebook - is it replacing face-to-face meeting?***

Ben Agger in his book 'Speeding Up Fast Capitalism' (2004) translates the theory of cultural domination and 'false needs' of Frankfurt School thinkers (such as endless consumerism, obsession with leisure activities and instant gratification derived from shopping) into the daily lives of people, like to which extent the acceleration of capitalism, taking place in the past years, is affecting our jobs, families, daily routines, eating and communicating with people.

According to Ben Agger, the Internet has increased the rate of communicating, writing, connecting, shopping, browsing and surfing, leading to the break of boundaries between different aspects of life, and to the acceleration of life, where there is no time left for thinking and critical analysis and meeting friends for intellectual discussion.

As a result, the domination of life by 'culture industries', formulated already by Frankfurt School, is ever omnipresent, as the Internet leads to the disappearance of the boundary between personal and public life, and people instead of relaxing in their home, continue working or are being bombarded by signals of external life through the means of new media (Internet and mobile phone).

"Nothing today is off limits to the culture industries and other industries that colonize not only our walking hours but also our dreaming" (Agger 2004, p. 3).

Thus, Agger is ambivalent about the positive aspects of the Internet, if its use is limited to shopping online and reading celebrities' stories.

According to Agger the way we communicate has also changed, as in a fast capitalism communication has also become faster, where instead of going and

meeting someone face-to-face we prefer a quick email exchange or Facebook chat box.

Many people with whom I talked about Facebook mention the fact that Facebook in general reflects broader changes taking place in our society, such as demand for convenience, where we are used to supermarkets open twenty-four hours a day and also the possibility to access friends twenty-four hours a day, a busier schedule for many people due to higher demand to advance one's career and a lack of time for relaxation. Facebook is a convenient tool in a convenient society. Consider what some users told me on this account.

".....it's all about convenience. You can go to the supermarket and do your shopping mid-night. You can get... to a certain degree, anything you need at any hour of the day. So, it follows that people will want a facility to communicate with each other conveniently whenever they feel like it" (Charlotte, face-to-face interview).

Charlotte also mentions the fact that people have much less free time nowadays.

"...I think that a lot of people have trouble with time nowadays. There is not enough time to do anything....leisure time is often a guilty pleasure rather than something you are entitled to. So, something which is quick and easy and also allows you to keep in touch with everybody at the same time is preferred to...you know, getting home, be prepared, getting out, spending time with people and then getting home, going to be late and being tired the next day. You know, it's a lot easier..." (Charlotte, face-to-face interview).

And as she continues:

"I think...that people generally have or think that they have less time. We tend to demand things quickly. At any hour of the day. And I think it's more true now than it perhaps was thirty, forty years ago, where emphasis was more towards face-to-face, family life and work-life balance. Things happen to be otherwise these days, when people tend to be involved with work all day. So, maybe we just want an easier and faster way to do things. It's about convenience, and you can see it in society quite a lot" (Charlotte, face-to-face interview).

Or consider what Joanna, another user of Facebook told me on the same issue:

"So, to start off with it was to see my friends, like to keep in touch with them, because it was an easy way to keep in touch with them...instead of 'oh, I must phone this person then I must phone this person'...because for one, you've got to have credit on your phone, then you've got to catch them in, then you've got to have time to sit down and have a chat to them and they might not have time

and I might not have time, then it's actually...for me, even though there can be several hours between contact with people, it's kind of waving at people and the wave stays there until they come and collect it. It's much better than a phone call or text messaging for me, because you're not interrupting people's lives to contact them. What you're doing is you've got a space in your life where you can contact people, and when they've got a space in their life they can contact you back. You can have conversations with people over time in a way you can't by phone, or when trying to meet up with people. It's difficult to get together and just sit there and have a chat, but on Facebook you can have a chat, and you know there are different ways of talking to people on Facebook, like you can do it in a public place or you can send private messages and there's a chat box as well" (Joanna, face-to-face interview).

And this leads to the following question - is Facebook replacing face-to-face contact?

Lisa Selin Davis in her article in Time magazine (2009) talks about Facebook recluse syndrome, a growing phenomenon where people instead of seeing each other in real life, prefer a Facebook conversation. It is more convenient, saves time and you can do it comfortably from your own home.

It seems that people spend less and less time with each other socially. British people now spend only around 50 minutes a day interacting socially with other people. Couples spend less time with each other, parents talk less to their children and people meet less with each other for coffee (Sigman 2009).

Moreover, it seems that more and more people live on their own and spend more and more time on online social networks or the Internet for personal communication.

"We seem to be in the process of retreating further into our homes, shopping for merchandise in catalogues or on television, shopping for companionship via personal ads" (Turkle 1995, p. 235).

Whether it is good or bad is a question and researchers have been debating about it since the advent of the Internet. Thus, some researchers proclaim that excessive use of the Internet leads to loneliness and isolation. Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukhopadhyay, and Sherlis (1998) carried out a long study from which they concluded that Internet use leads to the feeling of loneliness among its users. Brenner (1997), on the other hand, argued that the Internet

intervenes with other activities and can lead to addiction. Also Stoll (1999) and Turkle (1995) demonstrated that Internet usage can result in social isolation (Amichai-Hamburger and Ben-Artzi 2002).

Aric Sigman (2009), talking about biological implications of the use of new technologies, argues that increasing use of online social networks leads to physical estrangement, more stress level and isolation.

Mariam Thalos (2010) in her discussion of Facebook thinks that excessive use of Facebook leads to alienation and puts face-to-face contact at great risk, especially as we yet do not have the whole knowledge about what face-to-face does for us.

As Thalos argues, only face-to-face interaction can lead to real bonding. In offline interaction we rely on such things as facial expression, the tone of the voice and body's posture when we talk with someone. All these clues are absent in online world.

And yet with people communicating less in real life and more online, we are increasingly dependent on online social networks to communicate with our friends and relatives. This trend is especially visible among young people (boyd 2008).

Ray Oldenburg in his book 'The Great Good Place' (1999) talks about the fact that there is a general tendency to isolation, especially among American people. He talks nostalgically about 'great good places', 'homes away from homes', places such as cafés, coffee shops and other community gatherings where people used to meet and talk with each other. However, according to him, there has been a continuous decline of such places, due mainly to urban developments, where people increasingly live in isolated suburbs, meeting their neighbours less and needing an hour drive to reach the nearest café. This tendency is less pronounced in Europe, he admits, as well as the UK where the local pub still plays an important role in community gathering.

However, if older generations still prefer meeting face-to-face, young people rely more and more on the Internet, which increasingly becomes a new 'hang-out place'.

Oldenburg said that the traditional community spots served many purposes. It was a place where people could simply have fun, engage in all kinds of discussions but also form different associations which would reinforce community life.

"In true communities there are collective accomplishments. People work together and cooperate with one another to do things which individuals cannot do alone. Though much of this kind of effort is informal, it nonetheless requires a general understanding of who can do what; of the skills, abilities and attitudes of those in the neighbourhood. Third places serve to sort people according to their potential usefulness in collective undertaking" (Oldenburg 1999, p. XIX).

Third places also helped parents with looking after their children as well as providing support for elderly people. Nowadays, according to Oldenburg, people do not have a strong community centre any more.

Can Internet and online social networks serve as a new community gathering?

This had been a subject of many debates with views differing from each other. The pessimistic view on the subject is that the Internet is destroying community and distracts from real world communities (Turkle 1995, Putnam 1996), while optimists proclaim that the Internet creates other communities which are as valuable as physically located communities (Rheingold 1993).

Thus, Jones (1997), in studying the community formation on the Internet concluded that the Internet favoured a new community formation, more flexible and heterogeneous.

"The old concept of community is obsolete in many ways and needs to be updated to meet today's challenges. The old or 'traditional' community was often exclusive, inflexible, isolated, unchanging, monolithic, and homogenous. A new community - one that is fundamentally devoted to democratic problem-solving - needs to be fashioned from the remains of the old" (Jones 1997, p. 10).

Also Howard Rheingold (1993) has been very optimistic about the potential of the Internet for community building when he studied the Well, an online community of which he was a member. According to him, virtual communities, which he defines as "social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (Rheingold 1993, p. 5), are capable of providing psychological and emotional

support to its members and can also be a political, social and cultural forum. The technology that makes virtual communities possible has the potential to bring enormous leverage to ordinary citizens at relatively little cost - intellectual leverage, social leverage, commercial leverage, and most important, political leverage" Rheingold 1993 (, pp. 4-5).

Scholars who claim that the Internet is capable of forming genuine communities argue that the society is changing and thus, the notion of community is changing as well. Neil Postman (1995) in criticizing the fact that some Internet groups are called communities, argues that the traditional meaning of the community involves common obligation, from Latin root word 'communis' which is made of 'cum' meaning 'together' and 'munis' meaning 'obligation', and according to him, the sense of obligation is absent on the Internet. In response, some scholars point to the changing notion of community.

"Metaphors such as community change as humans adapt to new and emerging environments. In times of greater change, the older form of such a metaphor slips away because it is no longer as useful as it once was. Hence we have seen our understanding of 'community' shift from simple geographic proximity to communication and intimacy as social organization grew with the industrial Revolution" (Watson 1997, p. 123).

Sherry Turkle studying MUDs - Multi-User domains, such as Star Trek game, TrekMuse and LambadaMOO - computer programs or multi-user computer games, in which people create new characters in representing themselves, argues that the Internet allows people to gather around common interests and replaces the old community spaces.

Thus, Turkle as Oldenburg says that 'the great good place', a place where members of the community could gather for pleasure of easy company, a sense of belonging and conversation, has been in decline. And people are trying to fill this gap with neighbourhoods in cybespace.

Could Facebook be a new neighbourhood place?

On Facebook people mostly communicate with people they know. They could also join all kinds of groups and participate in all kinds of discussions. We have already seen that some researchers argue that Facebook can increase the

notion of one's social capital, it can also provide emotional and psychological support.

Thus, those who argue against the notion of community on cybespace often say that in the Internet trust is often absent, and trust is primordial in strong community building. "Trust is an integrative mechanism that creates and sustains solidarity in social relationships and systems" (Barber 1983, p. 102).

However, this criticism is less relevant for Facebook, as most people who communicate with each other there know each other in offline reality, and thus, trust is usually already built offline. It is different for groups where mostly strangers engage in discussions with each other, but the home page of Facebook, which is news feed, is usually where we can engage in conversations with people we know in the offline world. However, whether Facebook can be called a new neighbourhood place is a question, as most people with whom I talked admit that Facebook cannot replace meeting each other for a coffee.

Serge told me that Facebook is simply an additional tool to stay in contact with each other, but that it would never replace going out and meeting friends face-to-face.

"It's kind of the icing on the cake if you like, it's satisfying. When you're working in the office and you immediately maximise the Facebook page because it's always minimised and you see a friend and he types up something or he sees you, there's that button that lets you stay on or offline, and somebody sees you online and starts to type instant messaging asking you, 'what's up? How you doing?' and then you respond and tell them whatever, but that doesn't replace the satisfaction you get when your friend meets up with you and you go for a drink or a coffee or a meal" (Serge, face-to-face interview).

Or as Charlotte told me:

"I think it's a very useful additional tool. If it's some kind of distance relationship you are trying to maintain. I think if it's a way of maintaining a relationship with people you see on a daily basis or a regular basis, to a certain extent it can't replace meeting for a coffee...and discussing things, you know, face-to-face" (Charlotte, face-to-face interview).

So, Facebook is mostly seen as a useful tool, as an enhancement of email. It certainly allows the maintenance of long-distance relationships, but also to keep in touch with friends and relatives who live nearby. People, however, still prefer

to meet in real life, and it is unlikely that the Internet will ever replace meeting face-to-face.

## Conclusion

According to Poe's theory, Facebook is mostly a high-fidelity and high-volume medium, with sensualized social practices and pleasure-seeking.

However, as I showed, while it is true that Facebook's format is made mostly for entertainment purposes, the generalisation of Internet usage and online social networks, risks ignoring the individual experiences of users. People have different 'relationships' with Facebook: for some, it's like having a family, allowing them sharing intimate thoughts, for others it is just a tool.

Facebook is much more interesting, however, than simply viewing it as an entertainment channel or a tool to connect with friends. The usage of Facebook raises important questions in the age of capitalism, and in many ways it reflects our offline world. The network's usage leads to reflection about important issues in our current society, like our obsession with the celebrity culture, friendship, community and self-expression. While the properties of the network can be seen as exploitative for its users, users seem to derive a lot of benefits from using Facebook, like connecting with lost friends, sharing important moments in one's life with long-distance friends and relatives, telling to others what's on your mind. True, it seems that Facebook rarely leads to true friendship formation, but it does reinforce communication with existing friends, allowing building up weak ties, and opening new channels of communication – now everyone can know what you eat for your lunch.

These different aspects of what Facebook represents are also reflected in how the user can be seen on Facebook. Facebook user is a flâneur, a badaud and an empathetic worker in one, depending from which angle we look at what we are doing on Facebook. We all use Facebook for different reasons, often feeling emotions when we check statuses updates of our friends, while also deriving a pleasure from the sensational aspect that the network offers. All this is captured by Facebook to make profit.

## Chapter Eight: Privacy, Surveillance and Facebook

Poe argues that the Internet is a private and persistent medium. According to Poe, the more private a medium is, the more segmented its network will be and the more closed the social practices in it will be. In segmented networks one will find private social practices and privatism as ideology, where information remains secret. On the other hand, the less private the medium is, the more connected its network will be, and social practices in it will be open, with publicism as its ideology. "Publicism is rooted in the idea that information should be shared" (Poe 2011, p. 19).

Similarly, as Poe argues, the greater the persistence of a medium, the more additive its network will be, leading to historicisation of social practices. Addition makes exploring the past easier. In additive networks we can find historicised social practices with temporalism as an ideology. Temporalism is based on the idea that things change in time.

While I agree that the Internet is a very persistent medium, the privacy on the Internet depends on the site you join and taking into account the increasing surveillance in the network capitalism, privacy on the Internet is directly linked to the question of surveillance. Even using Google for search and reading will result in the fact that Google will have your interests stored in its database. This aspect of surveillance is totally absent in Poe's analysis, and he also doesn't take into account broader socio-political context. However, I agree with Poe that some properties of the network, as seen in the case of Facebook, such as its persistent nature, can lead to certain changes socially. For instance, the fact that all information on Facebook can be stored and assessed at a later date, or seen by potential employees has led to some important changes as to how we approach our privacy and how we present ourselves.

In this section I am going to look at the question of privacy and surveillance by addressing the following questions. To what extent do properties of a technology lead to changes as to how we approach our privacy? How do the persistent nature of the Internet and the collapse of different social contexts we can witness on Facebook influence the presentation of ourselves? And finally, and most importantly, to what extent is Facebook a tool of surveillance and exploitation and how does it reflect a society of surveillance?

## The Question of privacy and surveillance in the age of the Internet

Facebook is a semi-private or semi-public network with an ideology based on both privatism and publicism. It shares many characteristics with the Internet in terms of privacy while also being different from it.

Privacy is connected to power and surveillance. As I outlined in chapter six, power is the ability to exercise the control by some individuals or a group of individuals over other people. Surveillance is one of the tools of how this control can be exercised.

Privacy is a very complicated notion, especially in respect as to how it is viewed and promoted under capitalism, and even more under network capitalism. The classical definition of privacy of Warren and Brandeis (1890), seen in in the chapter on power, says that privacy is a right of individuals to be left alone. Westin defined privacy as “the claim of individuals, groups or institutions to determine for themselves when, how, and to what extent information about them is communicated to others” (Westin 1967, p. 7). Gormley (1992, 1337f) says that privacy incorporates many elements and distinguished between four types of privacy notion: 1. Privacy as an expression of individuality, 2. Privacy as autonomy, 3. Privacy as the possibility of citizens to regulate information about themselves, and 4. Mix and match approach, which incorporates seeing privacy as secrecy, anonymity and also solitude.

Thus, the notion of privacy is a broad one and contains many elements, such as the right to be left alone, anonymity, but also as the expression of oneself. However, under capitalism privacy has taken an antagonistic value where, one of the one hand, it means the right to be left alone by those in power, and also a right which is promoted but systematically broken through surveillance. Finally, under informational capitalism, privacy is promoted to ordinary people as a notion which has to become more open and be shared in order to accumulate more data on them. Therefore, we can distinguish between two elements of privacy: 1. Privacy as a liberal value which is a tool used to safeguard states and corporations and which is violated in regards to the rest of people by the means of surveillance and 2. Privacy as intimacy which can be shared.

For instance, de Bruin advances a liberal notion of privacy, saying that “privacy is a liberal value, and it does outweigh other liberal values in certain cases” (de Bruin 2010, p. 520, also quoted in Fuchs 2011, p. 1). Mark Neocleous (2002), on the other hand says that the rise of the liberal notion of privacy is one of the deciding elements in the construction of capitalism. He argues that “ ‘privacy’ as a political value came about with the rise of capitalism, the consolidation of the state, and the gradual emergence of liberal democracy” (Neocleous 2002, p. 86, also quoted in Fuchs 2011, p. 1).

The liberal notion of privacy corresponds to the 'bourgeois' notion of privacy and is a tool which is available to those in power (Fuchs 2011, p. 143).

Capitalism is based on the idea that the private sphere should be separate from the public sphere, where the individual should in principle be able to enjoy certain autonomy and anonymity. The notion of privacy under capitalism is linked to the freedom of private ownership. It is expected that individuals should enjoy some privacy in their private lives. However, in order to function, capitalism exercises surveillance over individuals, with the aim to have as much information as possible over workers and consumers to control them and encourage them for further consumption. Therefore, in the current age of capitalism, the idea of privacy is undermined by surveillance (Fuchs 2011).

Those in power have the possibility to hide their assets and not reveal information about themselves, by at the same time violating the rights to privacy of other individuals through surveillance. “Power is based on the dialectic of visibility and invisibility: powerful actors want to make their enemies and opponents visible, while they want to remain themselves invisible” (Fuchs 2010). And surveillance is a means to make it happen.

Most analyses of privacy in online social networks pursue the liberal discourse of privacy by focussing on the individual (what I call intimacy). However, the analysis of how individuals protect their own privacy within online social networks misses totally the control that Facebook exercises over the users when it collects their data, and how it promotes the exploitative function of capitalism by doing it.

Raynes-Goldie (2010) distinguishes between two aspects of privacy, the social and the institutional. In my opinion, by distinguishing between individual protection of privacy and institutional 'violation' of privacy we could reach a better understanding of the privacy issue within Facebook. These two aspects of privacy of Raynes-Goldie correspond to the two notions of privacy I outlined above, where privacy is a liberal right of those in power and where it is intimacy in the ordinary lives of people. The social aspect of privacy, or intimacy, deals with being able to control access to personal information, while the institutional aspect deals with the question as to how corporations behind the personal information (in this case Facebook) use this information, make profit out of it and violate thereof the privacy of its users (Netchitailova 2012).

In the analysis of privacy and Facebook, both aspects should be taken into account.

When we look at the question of privacy on Facebook, it is indeed important to look at what users themselves think of the privacy issue on Facebook. People, while subscribing to Facebook and while using it, agree with the fact that they give up certain aspects of their privacy, but it does not mean that they do not care about it. They do care about it, but they care about it in a 'Facebook context' where we can talk about 'contextual privacy' (Grimmelmann 2010, p. 4) and which comes from 'the contextual integrity' of Helen Nissenbaum (2004). This is the social aspect of privacy, as defined by Raynes-Goldie (2010), or intimacy as I call it in the context of Facebook, and which deals with the personal information revelation aspect on Facebook, or how users behave themselves in regards to their privacy. The social aspect of privacy on online social networks has been the main focus of study so far in regards to privacy and online social networks (for instance, Acquisti and Gross 2006, and Gross, Acquisti and Henz 2005). While this research has been very important for the understanding of the privacy issue on Facebook, it also has the tendency to focus on the user. And while the individual user experience should be taken into account in the analysis of Facebook and privacy (and I will look at it as well), privacy on Facebook also raises broader, more important questions for the analysis of privacy in our society in general. On the one hand, with the advancement of radio, television and especially the Internet, the public-private

dichotomy raised new questions about what should be open and public, and what should remain private and how to navigate it, and on the other hand, it also raises new questions about what is happening with our data. If we analyse the privacy policy of Facebook we can see that almost all our data can be sold to third parties, and this ultimately leads to the analysis of Facebook as a surveillance tool. This is the institutional aspect of privacy (Raynes-Goldie 2010) and deals with handling of our data by third parties (Netchitailova 2012).

In the analysis of Facebook and privacy both social and institutional aspects of privacy should be analysed. The social aspect deals not only with how users behave on Facebook in regards to their privacy but also with the question as to what should be public and what should remain private in the age of the Internet and the changing notion of privacy as intimacy. However, the institutional aspect of privacy, where all our data can be purchased, sold and used for advertising or marketing purposes is ultimately a more important issue when we analyse Facebook and privacy in the age of capitalism (Netchitailova 2012).

I will start by looking at the institutional aspect of privacy on Facebook.

### **Facebook and surveillance. The Institutional privacy**

As outlined above privacy in the age of capitalism is an antagonistic value, which on the one hand, is celebrated as a universal value which protects private property, and, on the other hand, is a value which is undermined by surveillance from corporations into the private lives of individuals in order to accumulate profit. "Capitalism protects privacy for the rich and companies, but at the same time legitimises privacy violations of consumers and citizens. It thereby undermines its own positing of privacy as a universal value... An antagonism between privacy ideals and surveillance is therefore constitutive of capitalism" (Fuchs 2011, p. 144).

Facebook is a typical case of privacy as antagonistic value. On the one hand, users expect that their privacy should be protected, and Facebook reassures them that they can adjust their privacy settings at any time, but, on the other hand, Facebook as a corporation collects data on its users and sells it to advertisers for profit accumulation.

As Fuchs argues, surveillance by governments and corporations forces people to behave in a certain way.

"Electronic surveillance by nation states and corporations aims at controlling the behaviour of individuals and groups, i.e. they should be forced to behave or not behave in certain ways because they know that their appearance, movements, location, or ideas are or could be watched by electronic systems. In case of political electronic surveillance, individuals are threatened by the potential exercise of organized violence (of the law) if they behave in certain ways that are undesired, but watched by political actors (such as secret services or the police). In the case of economic electronic surveillance, individuals are threatened by the violence of capital and the market that wants them to buy or produce certain commodities and help reproduce capitalist relations by gathering and using information on their economic behaviour with the help of electronic systems" (Fuchs 2008, p. 24).

According to Fuchs and Lyon (2001, 2003) the increasing surveillance by information technologies has led to a surveillance society. Lyon (2003) defines surveillance as 'routine ways in which focussed attention is paid to personal details by organizations that want to influence, manage, or control certain persons or population groups' (Lyon 2003, p. 5). Fuchs defines surveillance as "the collection of data on individuals or groups that are used to control and discipline behaviour by the threat of being targeted by violence" (Fuchs 2008, p. 24). For Fuchs surveillance "operates with uncertainty, invisibility, and psychological threats" (Fuchs 2008, p. 24). So, surveillance in this context is coercive, forcing people to behave in a certain way.

According to Christian Fuchs, since September 11, 2001 surveillance has intensified in such a way that we truly live in a surveillance society.

Facebook exercises both economic and, potentially, state surveillance over the users. I have discussed previously that Facebook users are not only the consumers but also are Facebook's product, and one part of profit accumulation in the current capitalistic society is 'knowing' the consumers and targeting us with personalized advertisements online.

The reader has already seen the definition of surveillance by Foucault, who argued that surveillance is a power that is capable of making things visible while

remaining itself invisible. It is relevant to remember what Giddens (1985) said about surveillance. For him surveillance mostly serves for the accumulation of information (such as birth certificates, marriages, deaths, etc) that can make life of citizens and the state easier.

"Surveillance as the mobilising of administrative power - through the storage and control of information - is the primary means of the concentration of authoritative resources involved in the formation of the nation-state" (Giddens 1985, p. 181).

Haggerty and Ericson (2000) coined the term the 'surveillance assemblage' arguing that private actors also conduct surveillance (in Fuchs 2008). While Anders Albrechtslund (2008), in regard to online social networks, argues that surveillance can also be empowering, subjectivity building and even playful.

"Online social networking can also be empowering for the user, as the monitoring and registration facilitates new ways of constructing identity, meeting friends and colleagues as well as socializing with strangers. This changes the role of the user from passive to active, since surveillance in this context offers opportunities to take action, seek information and communicate. Online social networking therefore illustrates that surveillance - as a mutual, empowering and subjectivity building practice - is fundamentally social" (Albrechtslund 2008).

For Albrechtslund the surveillance taking place on online social networks is participatory, as users can engage with other people and share things about themselves in a voluntary and fun way.

Seeing surveillance as participatory and empowering in certain cases , corresponds to the neutral concept of surveillance, where surveillance can contain positive aspects and be both enabling and constraining (Albrechtslund), and is a necessary condition for the organisation of societies (Giddens) (Fuchs 2010). The negative concept of surveillance, as seen by Fuchs and Foucault, and how I perceive it as well, "characterizes an aspect of the negativity of power structures, contemporary society, and heteronomous societies. It uses the notion of surveillance for denouncing and indicting domination and dominative societies (Fuchs 2010, p. 5). In a negative concept of surveillance, surveillance is a tool of coercive power, and is different from information gathering which is necessary for the functioning of the society.

As Fuchs argues, we are both targets of economic and state surveillance. Online social networks process, accumulate, analyse and sell our data, while there is also a threat that the individual information of users will be passed to the police or secret services. "Given the current societal framework, these processes are almost inevitable" (Fuchs 2008, p. 22).

All participants with whom I talked are concerned about this wider picture regarding the privacy on Facebook. The profile on Facebook gives an overview about one's political views, relationship status, current occupation, showing the network of friends and acquaintances. We give for free quite an accurate picture of our lives, and this data can be used for all kinds of reasons.

People I talked to about Facebook fear more the invisible eye of the government rather than embarrassing comments towards their friends. Some lie about their birthday or relationship status, some lie about their political comments, but still, the Facebook profile provides invaluable information about its users to anyone who would be interested to collect data on them.

And this bigger picture about privacy, about who exactly views our profiles and for which reasons, also determines our behaviour on Facebook to a certain extent. Raynes-Goldie in her paper (2010) argues, based on her ethnographic research, that users are mostly concerned about the social aspect of privacy. However, from my interviews and ethnographic observation, it appears that users care about both aspects of privacy: social and institutional. In fact, the concern as to what happens with users' data emerged as the biggest problem in using Facebook, based on my interviews. And this aspect of privacy is the one that indeed appears to be more worrisome. This is in line with the research conducted in the Austrian research project "Social networking sites in the surveillance society" (see <http://www.sns3.uti.at>), where a survey was done to see what users thought about online social networks. On the question as what are the greatest concerns of social networking sites, the main concern listed was "data abuse, data forwarding or lack of data protection that lead to surveillance" (Allmer 2012).

After having read the privacy policy of Facebook one more time two years ago, I almost stopped using the network exactly for this reason. I am still using Facebook, because its benefits out-weigh its minuses in my case, but I am not the only one asking the question as to what happens with my data. Samuel, the guy I interviewed about his usage of Facebook, lies about his basic information on Facebook, and never puts a picture of himself on the network in order to avoid giving an overview of his offline life.

Consider, for instance, what Amelie told me about this phenomenon:

"...I always self-censor on it really. I am very careful with what I write there because I feel it's a bit data-based thing of everything. I talked with a friend about it, and he told me that people shouldn't worry about tiny little details that people post on there. But it's the actual network itself that is created...friends that I have, they have their own friends. And it's this bigger picture that should be feared. This was his opinion which I thought was quite an interesting thing. People who are friends with other people and if the government wants to see: 'Okay, this person is a well-known protester, and he is a friend of this person...oh look, they are N.L (name of the group removed)'. It's like figuring a web of life really...those connections of groups and everything" (Amelie, face-to-face interview).

As Amelie mentions Facebook potentially provides a rich overview of one's life. On Facebook you can see the person's political views, his or her friends, person's status updates, etc, etc. This provides a powerful observation tool, and the government or corporations might indeed use it.

Tom, another participant told me, it is the bigger picture of who owns data and for what reasons that bothers him most about Facebook and using the Internet in general:

"Obviously you worry about the long-term consequences of this. Nobody knows how your data is being stored. I'm sometimes concerned about Facebook's data storage and data handling policies. I find their advertising targeting quite unnerving sometimes, how they're obviously targeting adverts towards you based on your profile information, I find that quite uncomfortable...But I don't know, because everyone else is on Facebook I feel it would be a detriment to leave. I've never really wanted to leave recently, so it doesn't bother me but I guess I'm worried about data storage in the long term. Who's handling it?" (Tom, face-to-face interview)

While Laura told me that if she were not working in academia but in another profession, her political views (she is an activist for Palestine's rights) would be a problem:

"Yeah, I don't really worry about how I'll be seen, because I don't have lots of things on there, like me being drunk or whatever. I'd say the main thing that's revealed about me is my political views, and I think if I was going into a different profession I might be concerned about that, but I think within academia it's kind of okay to be political, especially within sociology. But if you know what I am like - the reason I started to change the privacy settings is actually because I thought, 'what if I ever want to go to Palestine?' All that the Israeli passport control would have to do is look me up on Facebook and they'd see that I am Palestine activist and they won't let me in. So I thought actually yeah, that's kind of an issue, or what if I wanted to work for the government or something - they might think, 'mmm, this person is a bit of a, a bit of a radical, we don't really want them'" (Laura, face-to-face interview).

Consider also what some users said about surveillance in one of Facebook's groups while discussing Facebook and surveillance society:

User 1: "Outside of Facebook...when the big corporations come into play, then we're talking surveillance society. It's far more intrusive these days than just a couple of CCTV camera's on the corner of your street. Some of you may have noticed the new 'Dot' (mobile phone network for students) adverts popping up on Facebook at the moment, obscuring your picture galleries with no way to close it. Clicking on it will not only make Facebook money, but tell dot exactly what they want to know..." ('Discussions of Facebook', public group on Facebook 2010, now closed).

This is followed by a comment from another user:

User 2: "...there are specific aspects in Facebook to be concerned about...many details given in confidence can be used in identity theft...Friends of mine have posted telephone numbers, date of birth, full address, it is even possible to work out mothers maiden name from some of them. These can be viewed by anyone because of the security settings they have applied to their accounts. These members are being targeted by fraudsters, because it gives all kinds of illicit possibilities..."

Another element you might care to think about, many employers are using facebook to 'screen' applicants...Innocent 'friends' are actually vetting you...looking into many details of your 'real' life, as opposed to the somewhat edited picture you might be trying to present in your applications....

Web 2.0 offers all kinds of possibilities, but as you provide more content to the web, that information can be garnered by many companies...Remember that Tesco possesses a massive database on consumers, and links as much retail, electoral and personal information they can...it's very big business. This information is built up as a profile, generating electronic signals that marketing companies are very much interested in, and conceivably politicians, big corporations and even designers have huge vested interest in.

Big brother (and sister) is very much part of the family these days." (Discussions of Facebook', public group on Facebook 2010, now closed)

I have already discussed in chapter six that people do not necessarily oppose the fact that Facebook uses their information to make profit. They are concerned about it but are not sure whether they could do anything to oppose it. There is a passive acceptance of how Facebook is run in exchange of the benefits it seems to offer, and corresponds to the normalisation of surveillance in the daily lives of people as outlined in the works of Foucault.

The relationship between surveillance on Facebook and users is a complicated one. First of all, as discussed earlier, users also watch each other, and secondly, even if users are concerned about the 'big picture', it does not stop them from using Facebook.

As Amelie told me:

"It's quite scary really. That's why I try not to put much on it (Facebook), but then I still send mails through Facebook to people and still probably write there what I shouldn't. I don't know whether it has something to do with the nation feeling paranoid in any way. Why should they be interested in the information that I post? I don't know, maybe it does have something to do with in-built paranoia" (Amelie, face-to-face interview).

Users, in the majority of cases, do know about possible surveillance but as one picture circulated on Facebook demonstrates, they also make fun out of it. On

this picture we can see a photo of Julian Assange, with a text which says: "I give private information on corporations to you for free. And I'm the villain." Next to him there is a photo of Mark Zuckerberg, with a text which says: "I give your private information to corporations for money. And I'm man of the year."

However, this kind of interpretation, seeing surveillance as participatory and even 'fun' forgets another idea of Foucault that once surveillance is institutionalized, it becomes internalized into human practices in our society. As Roger Deacon argues (2002) in revisiting Foucault's theories about power:

"Power relations become more effective the more they infiltrate into everyday life, as they shift from being externally imposed to being internally invoked, from being authoritarian to being participatory" (Deacon 2002, p. 110).

Here power is exercised with our consent and through our contribution. On Facebook we willingly provide information about ourselves but also watch what others are doing. Here is surveillance from two sides: from us, the users, and from the invisible eye of the state and corporations. As Binoy Kampmark argues (2007), Facebook is a new panopticon:

"Three decades ago, Big Brother was the enemy. Now, with the proclaimed defeat of 'totalitarian' communism, the surveillance culture has moved into private life with our consent...Facebook...is much like panopticon - 'all-seeing', that surveillance device the English utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham pioneered in the nineteenth century for penal reform. Zuckerman shares more with Bentham that he realises: a desire to improve the quotient of pleasure in society, a desire to maximise the network for the common good...Members of the networks have become inspectors, just as they have become prisoners. People do 'communicate' with each other. It is a brilliant seduction: to give the means of surveillance to everybody in order to legitimise it. We see but we are also seen (at stages). We relinquish ourselves to others, but have the luxury of indulging in everyone's else's surrender of secrecy" (Kampmark 2007, p. 1).

As Fuchs argues, surveillance can take place in the form of electronic monitoring "as a general notion of providing and gathering information with the help of electronic systems" (Fuchs 2008, p. 24) and electronic surveillance "as the gathering of information on individuals or groups in order to control their behaviour by threatening the exercise of institutionalized violence or exercising economic violence" (Fuchs 2008, p. 24).

In the case of Facebook we can see both forms of surveillance. We monitor the behaviour of our friends through their status updates, but our behaviour is also

potentially being monitored by corporations and also the state. This is the externalised aspect of power I outlined previously. Facebook by giving the users the possibility to control their individual privacy settings (intimacy) creates the illusion among them that they are empowered because they can adjust their privacy settings. However, at the same time, by exercising surveillance over the users, Facebook violates their privacy and takes any real power away.

The privacy policy of Facebook, called 'data use policy' is long, ambiguous and confusing. It is unlikely that many users will read it while signing up. However, if you do want to read it, one needs to go through different links, pages and the like, to get the overall impression of the fact that Facebook collects quite a substantial amount of data on its users and shares most of it with advertisers. In December 2012 and then in August 2013 Facebook expanded the description of its privacy policy, making it even more unlikely that people will read it while joining the network.

When you start reading Facebook's new privacy policy, it becomes quite clear that Facebook collects all possible information on its users, including also the information which has nothing to do with Facebook at all, like the pages that the user visits. There is a following paragraph in Facebook's data use policy: "We receive data from the computer, mobile phone or other device you use to access Facebook...This may include your IP address and other information about things (???) like your internet service, location, the type (including the identifiers) of browser you use, or the pages you visit..." (Facebook 2012, question marks included by the author). All this information then can be processed and sold to advertisers. What exactly is sold to advertisers is not clear at all from all the texts the company has posted about its data use policy. It looks like almost anything can be sold to advertisers. But a more worrying question is: why would Facebook want all this information, especially the information that has nothing to do with the site?

Fuchs (2011) proposes an alternative notion of privacy, which he calls 'socialist notion of privacy' and which would protect consumers and citizens from corporate surveillance. He says that users are exploited by Facebook and

become, therefore, the commodity. His argument is that when users have so-called fun on Facebook, they actually continue working for free for the corporation and he names it 'Internet prosumer commodification' (Fuchs 2011, p. 155). Therefore, he proposes the de-commodification of the Internet and three strategies to achieve this goal: 1. The requirement that all commercial Internet platforms should be forced to use advertisement only as an opt-in option, 2. That there should be more monitoring of Internet companies from corporate watch-platforms, and 3. Establishment and support of non-commercial, non-profit Internet platforms, such as Diaspora.

As mentioned already users seem to have an ambivalent attitude towards the fact that Facebook uses them and sells their data. Yes, they are concerned about it, they do not like the fact that Facebook collects data on them, but actively opposing it seems to be a totally different matter. Would they also switch to alternative non-profit mediums, as proposed by Fuchs? Probably, but many users seem not to be aware of them and find that by switching they might lose on the social aspect if friends do not follow them.

Consider what some users told me on this account.

On the question as to what does she think about the fact that she is also a product of the network, Rachel told me the following:

"I benefit from Facebook in so many ways that I want to take it as a price for that. I know that it may be problematic for some profiles in society (e.g. younger/digital illiterate, etc) but if you ask the question personally, I don't really mind, as long as I do not put there anything that would harm my life" (Rachel, follow-up on face-to-face interview).

As to the question about switching to Diaspora, Rachel answered that Facebook has such a monopoly that it is difficult to switch:

"I signed to Diaspora, while they were in the testing phase, out of curiosity but honestly never went back. I also started others like G+ either out of curiosity or for professional reasons but they are ghost accounts. I think that with around a billion users, fb has become so solid that it is quite difficult to switch to something else" (Rachel, follow-up on face-to-face interview).

This opinion is shared by other users I talked to about this. Facebook is so present in the daily lives of people, that users are afraid to switch in order not to lose out.

Tom, for instance, while being very concerned about Facebook's privacy policy, is afraid to switch as friends might not follow him:

"It bothers me a lot (privacy policy). I often get paranoid and delete lots of past posts and photos from Facebook (although I know this is unlikely to make much difference as they can store all of this anyway, even if it's been deleted!). I would happily delete Facebook if it weren't for the fact that many of my friends use it as their primary method of communication...I would love to switch to something like Diaspora and would in fact regard this as ideal. The main barrier to this that few of my friends care about privacy/open access enough to move over as well" (Tom, follow-up on face-to-face interview).

While Laura, though very curious about Diaspora when I mentioned it to her, says that it would simply be time-consuming to switch to something else.

"I have not heard of Diaspora before, but the idea of a non-profit social networking site really appeals to me. I might now look into it. The only downside is that it takes time to build up contacts on new sites, and I already have so many contacts on Facebook....Joining new sites translates into more time updating my profile, making new contacts, checking messages, etc. I already find it time-consuming checking two email accounts...and Facebook, so to be honest, the thought of joining a new social networking site seems exhausting" (Laura, follow-up on face-to-face interview).

The above examples show that people, once aware about the issue, do care about institutional privacy and would probably do something about it if they knew what to do. A tentative generalisation emerges that people, who oppose collection of their data (and most users would probably oppose it if they knew how much is being collected and what it means), would perhaps consider switching to an alternative medium if enough friends followed, or actively oppose Facebook's policy if they knew how.

Would something like Diaspora be able to function in the current age of 'soft capitalism? Diaspora is a project of several volunteers who originally wanted to make coding on the Internet easier with the idea of the Internet free for all. The online social network stemming from this project greets you in the following

way: “Connecting socially is human nature. You shouldn’t have to trade away your personal information to participate” (Diaspora 2012). The concept is very different from the one adopted by Facebook, where the main emphasis is on collecting the personal information of its users. Diaspora operates through donations, just like Wikipedia, a free online encyclopaedia which is currently the fifth most popular site on the web (Wikipedia 2013). The success of Wikipedia which operates solely through the network of volunteers shows that a non-profit network is possible on the web.

Currently the European Commission is working on a reform of data protection policy with one of the main objectives to strengthen online privacy rights. However, the main issue seems to be in awareness: users do not always know how they can react to Facebook's policies and whether they can react at all. Groups such as Europe-v-Facebook, organised by Austrian students to help to spread awareness about protection of personal data seems to be an important step in the right direction. The more users know about the problem, read about it and know what to do with it, greater is the chance that they will respond to it. Also more awareness should be raised about the existence of alternative non-profit networks, such as Diaspora.

### **Social Privacy on Facebook**

Social privacy on Facebook deals with how users navigate their individual privacy settings on Facebook. I call social privacy intimacy, because of the nature of communication on Facebook. In the majority of cases people join Facebook to communicate with friends and share sometimes their intimate thoughts on there. Intimacy is close familiarity or friendship, according to the definition of Oxford dictionary (Oxford Dictionary 2013) but it can also mean a cosy environment. On Facebook we often reveal personal facts about ourselves, be it a birth date or a like or dislike. Taking into account that Facebook is a semi-public environment where all information about ourselves can become visible, the social privacy on Facebook raises important questions about the erosion between public and private and how to navigate intimacy on online space.

### ***Collapsing of contexts on Facebook***

The founder of Facebook himself thinks that we move into a more transparent society, where different social contexts collapse.

It is, in fact, an important point to consider while looking at the question of privacy on Facebook, as quite often when we accept 'friend' requests on Facebook, we mix quite different audiences in one place: friends, colleagues, relatives, etc. And this is one aspect of privacy which is often overlooked by researchers when analysing Facebook. How do people deal with collapsing of contexts on Facebook?

Friends are the second most important feature of Facebook. While joining the site users have to articulate with whom they want to connect and confirm ties to those who wish to connect with them. Once joining the site, the network 'suggests' friends, based on the contact list in the email address with which the user joins Facebook. The user can also look up people himself, but quite often people send other users requests to become 'friends' for all kinds of reasons. It can come from a family member, a close friend, an acquaintance, someone one met at a bar, etc, etc.

As boyd says, the public articulation of Friends is not simply an act of social accounting. "These Friends are rarely only one's closet and dearest friends. The listing of Friends is both political and social. In choosing who to include as friends, participants more frequently consider the implications of excluding or explicitly rejecting a person as opposed to the benefits of including them. While there are participants who will strictly curtail their list of Friends and participants who gregariously seek to add anyone, the majority of participants simply include all who they consider a part of their social world" (boyd 2010, p. 5).

Almost all participants I interviewed include people in their friends' list who they know or at least met once in real life. However, the term 'Friend' is misleading, as it does not necessary correspond to a friend in real life. "The term 'Friends' can be misleading, because the connection does not necessary mean friendship in the everyday vernacular sense, and the reasons people connect are varied" (boyd & Ellison 2007, p. 3).

'Friends' on Facebook can include close friends, family members, relatives, acquaintances, colleagues and bosses. The inclusion of different categories of friends results in the collapsing of contexts, where often work and pub merge together. "Digital worlds increase the likelihood and frequency of collapses and require participants to determine how to manage their own performance and the interactions between disparate groups" (boyd 2008, p. 3). Or as Alla Zollers says in different words, "The flattening of the network removes barriers between different user networks such as work, friends, family. This becomes problematic when people wish to represent themselves differently in multiple social networks...The addition and removal of friends is a new form of social etiquette. Thus, an individual's publicly articulated network as found on SNSs is actually a poor representation of their 'real' complex and dynamic network" (Zollers 2009, p. 604).

On Facebook people can have different audiences which, otherwise, are separated in real life (like colleagues, friends and family) and it can be tricky, since when users create their profiles or post something on Facebook they need to be aware that their audience is quite diversified.

The collapsing of contexts is something which has been happening already through television and radio, according to Meyrowitz. In his book 'No sense of Place' (1985) he gives an example of Stokely Carmichael, a civil rights leader in the 1960s. He used different rhetorical styles based on the race of the audience while giving speeches. However, when he started to address broader publics through radio and television he had to make a choice as to which style to use. He decided to use the black speaking style and it alienated the white audience.

As Meyrowitz says:

"When we find ourselves in a given setting we often unconsciously ask, 'Who can see me, who can hear me?' 'Who can I see, who can I hear?' The answers to these questions help us decide how to behave. And although these questions were once fully answered by an assessment of the physical environment, they now require an evaluation of the media environment as well" (Meyrowitz 1985, p. 39).

Facebook is a new media environment where the collapse of contexts and the presence of a wide audience ask for a careful examination of one's

performance and behaviour on Facebook. As the reader will see later, participants have different strategies to navigate the collapse of contexts which can occur on Facebook.

danah boyd calls Facebook a networked public, which according to her is 1) the space constructed through networked technologies and 2) the imagined community that emerges as a result of the interaction of people, technology, and practice. Networked publics, according to boyd, "support many of the same practices as unmediated publics, but their structural differences often inflect practices in unique ways" (boyd 2010, p. 1).

Boyd argues that in networked contexts information which was not supposed to be public can become public due to the properties of the network. "This stems from the ways in which networked media, like broadcast media... blurs public and private in complicated ways. For those in the spotlight, broadcast media often appeared to destroy privacy. This is most visible through the way tabloid media complicated the private lives of celebrities, feeding on people's desire to get backstage access...As networked publics brought the dynamics of broadcast media to everyday people, similar dynamics emerged..." (boyd 2010, p. 39).

Boyd distinguishes four properties - persistence, searchability, replicability, and scalability, and three dynamics - invisible audiences, collapsed contexts and the blurring of public and private, which characterise the networked publics.

Persistence means that online expressions are automatically recorded and archived. Replicability means that the content made out of bits can be duplicated. Scalability means that the potential visibility of content in networked publics is big and searchability means that the content in networked publics can be accessed through search.

These characteristics together with three dynamics mean that what is posted on Facebook can be accessed by a large public and stay around for future visibility. This can cause serious issues for privacy, as well as for one's own behaviour on Facebook, as people often forget about a potentially wide audience on Facebook while posting something on it.

Facebook raises new questions about what is private and what is public. The distinction between private and public has dominated the Western thought for a long time. It goes back to classical Greece with its philosophical debates about the life of the polis, when citizens could come together and discuss topics of common interests. The explicit articulation between private and public though goes back to the early development of Roman law, when public or the affairs of the *res publica* was separated from the private law (Thompson 1995).

In the late medieval and early modern periods, the distinction between private and public took on a new meaning, in response to institutional transformations which were happening at that time. Two basic senses of the public-private dichotomy started to emerge.

In the first sense the private and public dichotomy distinguished between the affairs of the state, or institutionalised political power, and the domains of economic activity and personal relations which fell outside the political control. This distinction between the private and the public was never really that rigid, influenced by the development of capitalist economic organizations, where the clear-cut between the economy and the state was blurred. States took on a more interventionist role and often would regulate economic activities. On the other hand, also private individuals would start forming organisations with the aim to influence the policies of the state. However, Thompson (1995) gives a broad distinction between the private and the public as developed in Western societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus, the private domain includes "privately owned economic organisations operating in a market economy and oriented to some degree towards profit realization, as well as a range of personal and familial relations which may be informed or formally sanctioned through law (for instance, by marriage)" (Thompson 1995, p. 122). The public domain includes "a range of state and quasi-state institutions, from legislative and judicial bodies to the police, military and secret services to a variety of welfare organizations; it also includes state-owned economic organizations, such as nationalized industries and state-owned public utilities" (Thompson 1995, p. 122). Thomson mentions the fact that several intermediate organisations have emerged in recent years, which neither belong to the public domain nor can be assigned fully to the private domain. These organisations

include non-profit charities such as Oxfam or Save the Children Fund, mutual benefit organizations, like clubs and trade organizations, and "political parties and pressure groups which seek to articulate particular viewpoints; and economic organization which are owned and operated on a cooperative basis." (Thompson 1995, p. 123)

The second sense of the public-private dichotomy which has developed in Western social and political discourse distinguishes between 'public' as being 'open' or available to the public and the private, as being closed or hidden from view. Public is what is visible and observable, private is what stays behind closed doors, done in privacy and secrecy. "In this sense, the public-private dichotomy has to do with publicness versus privacy, with openness versus secrecy, with visibility versus invisibility. A public act is a visible act, performed openly so that anyone can see; a private act is invisible, an act performed secretly and behind closed doors" (Thompson 1995, p. 123).

As Thompson says, even if the first sense of private-public dichotomy is distinct from the second, historically these two senses often merged. Thus, public was often related to the affairs of the state, while private was confined to the family matters, what was done in privacy. In Ancient Greece, the exercise of political power was done in public, when citizens would assemble in a common place and discuss political issues and make decisions. Also in the traditional monarchical states of medieval and early modern Europe, when kings, princes and lords appeared in front of their people, they would do it in order to "affirm their power publicly (visibly)" (Thompson 1995, p. 124). The public appearances were carefully prepared events, where the power of the monarch was glorified. However, the main decisions related to the state were made behind closed doors, in privacy - "...the privacy of decision-making processes was commonly justified by recourse to the *arcana imperii* - that is, the doctrine of state secrecy, which held that the power of the prince is more effective and true to its aim if it is hidden from the gaze of the people and, like divine will, invisible" (Thompson 1995, p. 124).

However, the development of new media of communication, especially television, has reconfigured the boundaries between the public and the private.

Before the development of the media, public was linked to sharing a common place or locale. An event was public when it was seen by people present at it. As Thompson says it related to "traditional publicness of co-presence" (Thompson 1995, p.125). The public event was a spectacle in which all traditional clues of a face-to-face interaction were involved: the event was seen and heard in real life.

However, the advent of media created new forms of publicness, different from traditional publicness of co-presence. The publicness of events, people and places was no longer linked to sharing a common locale. As Thompson says the advent of media led to the creation of 'mediated publicness'. This started with the world of print, when events and actions of people could be recoded in written form and read independently of the event itself. It created a "reading public which was not localized in space and time" (Thompson 1995, p. 126).

Television also exuberated this trend, but at the same time it established a new relation between publicness and visibility. Television enabled people to see and hear events as if it was occurring in real life, and in this respect it is quite similar to the experience of traditional publicness of co-presence. However, it is also different as it allows many more people to witness events who at the same time are watching it from different locations and in different contexts. It is also different from witnessing an event in real life, as television has the control over what is visible and should be seen. It chooses the angle from which an event should be shown. This raised new issues about visibility, like what should be shown, how and when and led to the new issues about privacy, as many lives of many public figures were now publicized in front of millions of other people. As Thompson argues: "...the development of communication media provides a means by which many people can gather information about a few and, at the same time, a few can appear before many: thanks to the media, it is primarily those who exercise power, rather than those over whom power is exercised, who are subjected to a certain kind of visibility" (Thompson 1995, p. 134).

This also led to the rise of the celebrity culture, where lives of celebrities became a public event and where celebrities are not necessarily those who

achieved something in their lives, but those lives simply became public. This is especially true for reality TV stars (Turner 2004).

As Thompson argues the new visibility created by television, while having created new opportunities, also created new risks and especially in regard to the private lives of public people. As he says "mediated visibility is a double-edged sword. While new media of communication have created new opportunities for the management of visibility, enabling political leaders to appear before their subjects in a way and on a scale that never existed before; they have also created new risks. The mediated arena of modern politics is open and accessible in a way that traditional assemblies and courts were not. Moreover, given the nature of the media, the messages produced by political leaders may be received and understood in ways that cannot be directly monitored and controlled. Hence the visibility created by media may become the source of a new and distinctive kind of fragility" (Thompson 1995, p. 141).

The new kind of visibility created by media can lead to disturbing consequences, especially when also their private lives are monitored. Thompson mostly talks about political leaders and the effect of television, but it is even more reinforced by the advent of the Internet and involves not only political leaders and celebrities, but also ordinary people, when every move has the potential of being monitored. Thompson mentions mainly five types of trouble that can backfire on public people, such as gaffe and outburst; the performance that backfires, the leak and the scandal.

Gaffes and outbursts happen the most often and if it was also common for political leaders to make 'faux pas' while appearing before the public in face-to-face interactions, the advent of television made these mistakes more visible and more talked about. Gaffes and outbursts can be recoded and then seen and discussed by millions.

In the case of a performance that backfires, it usually happens when the person who performs is in the control of the situation, but his message is misunderstood or misjudged. While a leak or a scandal "can be understood as a breakdown in the attempt to manage the relation between front-region and back-region behaviour" (Thompson 1995, p. 143). Information or performance

that is reserved for backstage behaviour becomes visible and public. This especially happens with celebrities and the celebrities' magazines thrive on this kind of occurrences.

However, with the advancement of the Internet and due to its persistent nature it can create new problems for reputation, and a person who once misbehaved can be punished for the rest of his or her life because of the Internet.

Take for instance, the story of the 'dog poo girl'. It happened in South Korea, when a young woman's small dog defecated in the train. She was asked to clean after the dog by fellow passengers but refused. However, someone took a picture of her and posted it on the Internet. Within hours she became an Internet phenomenon and everyone started to recognise her on the streets. The girl's life was destroyed simply due to the fact that her picture was on the Internet. It is certainly against the norms of politeness not to clean one's dog's poo, but does it deserve to chase one for the rest of their lives? The thing with the Internet is that it is capable of destroying someone's reputation and damaging one's life, while in the past such acts as not cleaning the dog's poo would remain in the community and be simply the subject of verbal reprimanding, easily forgotten the next day. The Internet, however, can chase people not for who they are but for what they did once in their lives and would rather forget about it rather than stumble upon it on the Internet day after day. We all make mistakes in our lives, but the Internet has the capacity to transform these mistakes into a permanent Scarlet letter.

The Internet changes the nature of gossip and small talk. Gossip in itself is neither good nor bad - we all gossip at some point in our lives, but the Internet makes a permanent record out of gossip and it can play havoc with people's lives.

Facebook, where people post details about their private lives can also create problems to someone's lives. Some students 'clean' their profiles when they start looking for a job. But the problem with Facebook, and the Internet, is that everything you ever posted on it has the potential to stay there forever. You might delete the post you no longer like, but not before a friend of yours shared your post with someone else or saved it for some reason. Facebook and the

Internet lead us to rethink the question about privacy - what should be visible to everyone else and what should remain a secret? The problem with Facebook is that often when we post something on it, we think that only a small group of people will read it, we often compare it to a small gathering of friends. However, a Facebook gathering is totally different from a gathering in real life, as on Facebook everything has the potential to become visible to a large public.

As users say, the collapsing of contexts, the presence of invisible audience, and the blurring of private and public are the factors which cause some problems when using Facebook.

As Charlotte, a participant told me, combining different audiences can be quite a difficult task:

"I think it's quite difficult on Facebook to form a true view of what people are like. Because you present yourself in a certain way. And I think, that's why you have to be careful. In terms of including material in your profile if you got a very mixed audience for your profile, like friends, colleagues, students, parents. You have to be careful how you portray yourself I think. And I think that potentially there are a lot of different facets to a person. You know the person that you present when you are at work, the person that you present when you are out with your friends, and the person you present to your family can often be different things. And combining them all in a profile is a tricky business" (Charlotte, face-to-face interview).

Lynne, another participant, told me that people often forget about the potentially large audience on Facebook, while posting a status update:

"...I mean, obviously people are doing those things, posting quite intimate details as status updates, but I think there is this issue about what people remember about who is seeing it. So, there may well be things that they're...it's not that they don't want it to go to the world; it's that they're not thinking it's going to the world, they are thinking it's going to their friends, and they are thinking very often about specific friends...But you know, when you post something, not about your breakfast, but something like, "There is a dunno's nest in a tree outside my door, it's wonderful!" You know, I am not thinking about telling the world about this, I am thinking about telling quite specific people within my network about this because I know they will be interested, and so you forget that it's going to everybody out there. Unless you take care to remember to be careful" (Lynne, face-to-face interview).

And as Charlotte continues, sometimes people post something on someone else's wall, forgetting that it can be visible to many different people:

"I think it's easy to forget that a lot of people can see when you post something on somebody's wall. It's just easy to assume that it's private because it's a conversation between two of you. And it's not always the case. So some people do post things that can be seen as contra-defensive or inappropriate. Because their feeling is that they are in a private conversation with one of their friends and then they almost forget that anyone can see it. I am quite careful what I post on people's walls and, as I said, I tend to use the private message facility if it's anything that I don't want people to see. And it's quite irritating when other people put something offensive or inappropriate on your wall. Because it's as if it becomes a reflection of you rather than reflection of them" (Charlotte).

Another participant, Mina, told me about potential problems arising from the fact that colleagues or certain family members (like in-laws, for example) can be 'friends' on Facebook and how she was reluctant to include her in-laws in her friends' list because they could judge her behaviour on Facebook.

The characteristics and dynamics of the network can in some instances cause serious problems. There have been stories in the press about how some comments posted on Facebook brought havoc in some people's lives. Thus, an Australian hairdresser lost her job after she had posted this status update on Facebook: "Xmas 'bonus' along side a job warning, followed by no holiday!!! Whooooooo! The Hairdressing Industry rocks man!!! AWSOME!!!!" (All Facebook blog 2010).

The hairdresser won eventually a compensation battle for losing her job but did not recuperate her job. As commissioner for Fair Work Australia Michelle Bissett commented: "What might previously have been a grumble about their employer over a coffee or drinks with friends has turned into a posting on a website that, in some cases, may be seen by an unlimited number of people...Posting comments about an employer on a website that can be seen by an uncontrollable number of people is no longer a private matter but a public comment" (All Facebook blog 2010).

One friend told me a story about a friend who asked her pictures not to be taken at a party. "Don't take my pictures and if you put any on Facebook, I will be very angry", she told other people at the party. Apparently she said at her work that she was ill, while in fact she was enjoying the party.

Another friend mentioned a student, studying clinical psychology and who was suspended from her course after she had written: "Dealing with the mad, bad and sad", referring to her studies. If she made this remark at a pub with friends, this would be considered as a joke and easily forgotten, but the public nature of Facebook and the fact that everything which is written there is scalable and persistent, make these kind of comments potentially damaging for one's reputation and life.

In another instance Virgin Atlantic sacked 13 cabin crew after they posted messages on Facebook referring to passengers as 'chavs' and making jokes about faulty engines (Quinn 2008).

Joanna, another participant, told me about her problems at work after she had posted some drawings she made of colleagues on Facebook. Her boss was not happy with the fact that she was posting these drawings on Facebook and asked her to remove them. It caused a considerable conflict for Joanna, as she judged that her boss was intervening in her private life, while, according to Joanna, her private life was her sole responsibility. But with the increasing use of Facebook, there is a growing question indeed whether what we post on it can be considered as private.

The example of Joanna shows that what we post on Facebook is not necessary private, even if the settings are set on private, and that everyone can get an access to our posts.

Thus, Facebook sets new questions about privacy and about one's behaviour in public. Facebook is a semi-public space, and even if one limits the amount of friends or who has access to a profile, the content of one's profile can still potentially be open to a larger public. We behave differently in public and in private, while at work or at home, among friends or colleagues. Facebook potentially mixes the two environments and creates a new social context, a new semi-public space, where new rules of behaviour and performance emerge.

Goffman (1959) breaks down individual behaviour into two broad categories: 'back region' or backstage behaviour and 'front region', or onstage behaviour. For instance, waiters when they serve customers, are in a front region. But

when they go to the kitchen or on a break, they go into a backstage behaviour. In front region they are expected to show efficiency and be polite, while in back region they might chat about customers, relax and make comments about what is going on in the front region. The same can be said about many social situations. We behave differently in front of students and children - there is an expected behaviour of a teacher or a parent. A parent will not make certain remarks in front of a child, but can behave differently with his or her partner. We behave differently according to a social context in which we find ourselves.

According to Meyrowitz electronic media, especially television, have led to the overlapping of many social contexts which previously were distinct. Television is able to capture moments of private lives of people, which previously were hidden from public view.

"In contrast to face-to-face conversation and books, for example, radio and television now make it more difficult for adults to communicate 'among themselves' because they are often 'overheard' by children. In a similar way, electronic media have heightened men's and women's knowledge of each other's social performances for the opposite sex. And the merger of different audiences and situations through radio and television has made it difficult for national politicians to say very specific things to particular constituencies or to behave differently in different social situations" (Meyrowitz 1986, p. 5).

Thus, Meyrowitz argues that before electronic media there were sharp distinctions between 'onstage' and 'backstage' behaviours. But "by bringing many different types of people to the same 'place', electronic media have fostered a blurring of many formerly distinct social roles. Electronic media affect us, not primarily through their content, but by changing the 'situational geography' of social life" (Meyrowitz 1986, p. 6).

The merging of situations leads to a new behaviour, which Meyrowitz calls *middle region*. The middle region behaviour arises when audience members get a 'sidestage' view. They see parts of the traditional backstage area together with parts of the traditional onstage behaviour, and see the performer move from backstage to onstage. An example of middle region behaviour is when children stay long enough with the parents. Parents do not usually discuss such topics as death, sex or money in front of the children, but if the children stay present at

an adult party, parents might start discuss adult topics in front of them, while avoiding the explicit characteristic of an adult party. The longer children stay with the parents, the more likely they are to see the childish side of adults.

Middle region behaviour is the behaviour that results from the merger of previously distinct situations, and electronic media, according to Meyrowitz is the primary cause for the creation of a middle region. Television, for instance, allowed more and more people to have a glimpse of the private life of celebrities and politicians. Such mass exposure has led to the fact that politicians and celebrities would adapt their public behaviour to be more appropriate for consumption.

Meyrowitz had written his book before the advance of the Internet, but his definition of a middle region can easily be applied to Facebook. As mentioned previously, Facebook is a semi-public space, where distinct social contexts merge together. Facebook behaviour can be called middle region behaviour where we have to handle the fact that colleagues and friends alike can see what we post. Even if one chooses only to include very close friends into one's social network, the semi-public profile of Facebook and its persistent nature mean that one has to think carefully about the implications of Facebook performance.

Users have different approaches as to how to negotiate the possible complications arising from the characteristics of the network and the potential for collapsing contexts. One participant, Rachel, for instance, has a very close network on Facebook and does not include anyone in her network, apart from real friends. She keeps her professional and social lives separate by limiting who can have access to her network.

"...I don't want people from my professional life in there. I would never let my supervisors, for instance, be my friends on Facebook. It just would not seem right because my social life is quite active actually, and I'm a little bit, you know...alternative. There are lots of photographs and lots of references on my Facebook site to my social experiences and I don't want them to mingle with my professional experience" (Rachel, face-to-face interview).

And as Rachel continues:

"There's nothing extraordinary really going on, I just like to keep things separate. We do a lot of events which can be quite elaborate and they could involve me getting dressed up in some quite unique outfits. So, for instance, for one friend, because he likes to go to these fetish parties, we all dressed up in fetish outfits and gave him a fetish breakfast so there are photographs of me on Facebook in like, S&M outfits or, there are photographs of me dressed like a turtle or photographs of me dressed as an old lady, or...so there are photographs or references to all these things and it's nothing particularly damaging for anybody to see but I just don't want people who are not involved in that to have access to it" (Rachel, face-to-face interview).

Lynne, another participant changes her privacy settings while posing something on Facebook.

"But there is also the issue of who can see the status and who can't, and of course it is customisable, but not everybody customises it. Mostly, the kind of things I put down as a status, I am unhappy to have public. When I was going away, I set it so that only people in my friends, and not even their friends, could see, so that I could actually say things while I was away about where I was and so on without giving to the entire world that I was away from my house for a week, which is of course, an issue" (Lynne, face-to-face interview).

While Mina is very careful about her status updates and the pictures she uploads on Facebook:

"For example, I am still a research assistant in (country removed) but my boss has sent me here to do my PhD and I am friends with my colleagues in the university but they are also my employers because I am the research assistant and they are there permanently in that department, so sometimes, if I say, for example, 'I am going to Vienna', or 'I am going to Prague, sometimes they tell me, 'Oh, why are you going?' because maybe it is a joke but it still includes some kind of seriousness because I have to be doing my PhD here and I am going to all these places. So I try to be careful when writing such things so I will say, 'I'm going to Vienna for a conference'...Or, for example, I don't want to upload very personal photos, maybe, you know, there are some photos with friends" (Mina, face-to-face interview).

Another common strategy is to simply 'clean' a profile at some point, as I've mentioned already. As Tom, a user, told me it happens quite often that students start to embellish their profiles when they look for a job:

"I have a couple of friends who've gone into certain jobs and I've noticed that that is the definite way; it turns a lot more professional. People who've gone into serious, corporate jobs, have taken a lot of photos down and have removed a lot of information about themselves, I've noticed that...Some of them, I've noticed, finished university last year and two friends in particular stand out as ones that basically overhauled their profile completely, and they kept some stuff on of course, but there's a lot of stuff that was removed. There's a lot of pictures they removed and there's pictures they didn't remove, which means they obviously knew that certain pictures might not be appropriate or they might feel they're not appropriate...I think that's quite obviously that employment thing; they've heard the stories, they're worried..." (Tom, face-to-face interview).

The examples above demonstrate that people do in fact care about privacy but they care about it in a different way from the one analysed in the works of Acquisti & Gross 2006, Dwyer 2007, Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini 2007, who claim that users do not care about privacy. Users of Facebook usually are ready to reveal some aspects about their lives on the Internet in exchange of the benefits Facebook offers (mostly the possibility to communicate with friends), but it does not mean that they give up their privacy. What is important for users is mostly not to have anything embarrassing for professional reasons, either when looking for a job or having a job already. But few worry about posting some facts about their lives. If anything, this is the allure of Facebook as well: create a profile, put status updates, read newsfeed.

Therefore, in the case of Facebook we can talk about 'contextual privacy'.

### **Contextual Privacy**

As I argued in the previous section, users do care about privacy on Facebook, but privacy does not necessary mean deleting one's account and never doing anything on the Internet. We also saw that Facebook behaviour can be called 'middle region behaviour' which arises when different social contexts merge with each other. The middle region behaviour has become more common since the

advancement of radio and television, and now the Internet, but the exposure of some of our personal details on Facebook reflects another trend: celebrity culture.

Clive Thompson in his article 'Brave New World of Digital Intimacy' (2006) is talking about 'ambient awareness', about which I talked in the previous section, and which is like "being physically near someone and picking up on his mood through the little things he does - body language, sighs, stray comments - out of the corner of your eye" (Thompson 2006). According to him the new information technologies bring ambient awareness to a new level. "The growth of ambient intimacy can seem like modern narcissism taken to a new, supermetabolic extreme - the ultimate expression of a generation of celebrity-addled youths who believe their every utterance is fascinating and ought to be shared with the world" (Thompson 2006).

Status updates on Facebook can be argued as being a reflection of the new celebrity culture. The popularity of such shows as Larry King, Big Brother or I am a Celebrity Get Me out of Here, show that we are attracted to the intimate details of other people lives.

David Silverman (1987) said that we live in an interview society, while Norman Denzin says that: "the electronic media and the new information technologies turn everyday life into a theatrical spectacle where the dramas that surround the decisive performances of existential crises are enacted" (Denzin 2003, p. 143).

Facebook takes 'the interview society' to a new level. Now ordinary people, and not only celebrities, can open a curtain into some aspects of their lives. As one participant, Richard, mentioned, people are attracted by the possibility to post on Facebook because no one can stop them:

"People put more than they would put if they were just simply sitting with a person and telling something about themselves" (Richard, face-to-face interview).

Facebook is simply reflecting the new trend in our society - it has become fashionable to reveal private aspects of our lives.

Graeme Turner in his 'Understanding Celebrity' (2004) explains the popularity of such shows as Big Brother. The attractiveness of these shows is that it makes

the everyday reality more appealing and turns it into an entertainment. With the growing use of cameras and television everyday reality became a commodity. "Inside the idea of reality TV is the offer to display our everyday identities as a spectacle, as an experiment, as entertainment - and television's insatiable appetite for ordinary people to display their identities ensures that the offer is made to an increasing number of prospective participants" (Turner 2004, p. 62).

The reality TV's idea was to eliminate the distinction between the television and reality and the attractiveness of these shows is that it allows witnessing the everyday routines of others.

Facebook can be compared to a reality show as it allows the users to disseminate the information about their everyday activity. One participant disagreed with me when I compared Facebook to reality TV as on Facebook, unlike on reality TV, people look at information posted by their friends rather than strangers and information is put there voluntarily.

"No, I think it is different - on reality TV you see everything about them don't you? You see them having a shower, you see them having breakfast, you see them doing virtually everything. But on Facebook, you only see the things that are voluntarily put there" (Serge, face-to-face interview).

However, I disagree with Serge as I think that Facebook's format follows the idea behind reality TV. Participants on reality TV go there voluntarily, they are voluntarily ready to expose their private lives, and engage in a public performance of their private lives in front of an audience. We never know for sure whether what we see on reality TV depicts correctly the lives of the participants or whether they just perform in front of the cameras. The same is with Facebook. People voluntarily expose details about themselves and engage in a public communication with their friends, sometimes for all kinds of different reasons. We might comment on a status update in order to show our sense of humour, in order to show how clever we are or simply because we want to say something. However, since we know that there is an audience and potentially large - we engage in a performance in front of the public because we want to attract attention to ourselves or to what we have to say.

Boyd (2008) talks about attention economy, in which everyone wants their fifteen minutes of fame. Facebook appeals to our desire of fame and to be

visible and might reflect the culture obsessed with the reality shows, where everyday life becomes an entertainment.

When we read others' status updates or look at their pictures, we are also attracted by their entertainment aspect. Aristotle said that humans are social and curious creatures. The news feed of Facebook appeals to our curiosity.

Privacy on Facebook then, also reflects the celebrity culture and the desire to be heard and seen in the current age. Privacy on Facebook is also different from the privacy one would expect to find in one's home. Privacy is not just about keeping things secret, privacy is also about being free to behave differently in different social contexts. Facebook, as was discussed previously, creates a new social context, where both private and public merge together, and in regard to Facebook we can talk about 'contextual privacy'. As outlined already this concept from Grimmermann (2010) is based on the 'contextual integrity of Helen Nissenbaum (2004) and which "ties adequate protection for privacy to norms of specific contexts, demanding that information gathering and dissemination be appropriate to that context and obey the governing norms of distribution within it" (Nissenbaum 2004, p. 101). Thus, in all contexts we can talk about different levels of privacy, we behave differently in public and at home. "Almost everything – things that we do, events that occur, transactions that take place – happens in a context not only of place but of politics, conventions, and cultural expectation" (Nissenbaum 2004, p. 119). Facebook is a specific context, where we connect with friends and reveal some intimacy because of assumption that it won't be violated. As James Grimmermann explains:

"Actually, it's the sceptic who has things wrong about privacy on Facebook. Facebook users do care about privacy, and they do try to protect it on Facebook. The sceptic goes wrong when she assumes that 'privacy' can only mean something like 'keeping things secret'. It doesn't - privacy is much richer and subtler than that. Privacy is a key component of being free to be yourself, building healthy relationships, and fitting into a community that values you. Facebook users care about contextual privacy: they want others to respect the rules of the social settings they participate in" (Grimmelmann 2010, p. 4).

Contextual privacy means that Facebook users do care about privacy, but they care about different things than what some researchers (for instance, Gross and

Acquisti) say they should care about. Once joining Facebook we automatically agree that we give up certain aspects of our privacy. Facebook is a social network, and as Grimmelmann argues, 'social' and 'privacy' do not work together.

"So here's the thing: Connecting with people always means giving up some control over your personal details. 'Social' and 'secret' don't work together. Whoever you interact with is going to learn something about you. Buy a pack of gum at the newsstand, and the guy behind the counter will learn what you look like - and that you like gum. Watch a movie with friends and they'll learn something about your taste in movies. Make jokes on their Wall and they'll learn something about your sense of humour. You can't get a life without giving something in return" (Grimmelmann 2010, p. 7).

When I joined the network I did not see the problem in revealing my name and uploading my picture. The nature of the network is such that by agreeing to join it, we also agree to give up some aspects of our privacy, like our name and the way we look. Facebook is a social network, and the whole point of being on Facebook is to share some things with others, like the photo album of our latest holiday.

People who also post their phone numbers or address, face indeed more risks for their physical and online well-being, but from my 250 friends on Facebook only two friends did it in the beginning and removed this information shortly afterwards, because, they were concerned about privacy.

The thing about Facebook is that once you join it, you always run some risks about privacy. A secret you told only a few friends might be revealed through a random comment, you might be tagged in an embarrassing picture, or someone might remind you how badly you behaved at school through a post on your wall.

The incident with Sir John Sawers's wife only demonstrates too clearly that everyone risks some violation of privacy once joining the network, regardless of status or professional occupation or how careful you are. The wife of Sir John Sawers, Britain's new spy chief, had posted sensitive information about herself, her husband, her family and their friends on Facebook without adjusting her privacy settings. In fact, all members of Facebook could see her family's holiday pictures and the information about where Sawers live (Doyle and Fraser 2010).

If the wife of the spy is prone to such risks, then what about the rest of Facebook's users?

The thing is - almost everyone who is a member of Facebook has an embarrassing story to tell. The semi-public nature of the network and the collapsing of contexts mean that some information will be visible to everyone (like our name and our picture), and some information will be visible to 'friends' who are not our real friends. Also the characteristics of the network as defined by boyd, such as persistence, replicability, scalability and searchability mean that some secrets are bound to be in the open. Facebook is a place where embarrassment happens all the time.

Just the other day a friend of mine put the following status update on my wall: "I really enjoyed our chat in London over champagne and lunch!" Nice, but the thing is, - I was supposed to be at university, at my desk, working like crazy on this thesis.

These kinds of things also happen in real life. Someone might say something embarrassing, or another person might reveal a secret by mistake - but in general the clear boundary between social contexts means that these kind of 'accidents' happen rarely and are dealt with more easily in offline life. On Facebook, on the other hand, the presence of an invisible audience means that we do not always know who reads our posts and who will stumble upon an embarrassing picture. But this does not mean that people do not care about privacy. They do care about it, but care about it in the framework of a new social context, the Facebook context, where, once joining, people agree to give up some aspects of their privacy in return for online communication with their friends.

However, Facebook violates our contextual privacy through surveillance. Users can adjust their individual privacy settings if they do not want friends to see specific information or if they want their profiles to be private, but Facebook, by collecting the personal information that users post breaches their right to be left alone. As Nissenbaum explains in regards to contextual integrity, "personal information revealed in a particular context is always tagged with that context and never 'up for grabs'..." (Nissenbaum 2004, p. 125). Users communicate

with their friends on an online social network which promises to make the world more connected and open. At the same time Facebook invades our intimacy in order to make profit out of it.

Thus, the question of privacy on Facebook is much more complicated than the individual behaviour of its users. The question of privacy on Facebook is also a question of surveillance and a question of power, since surveillance is a tool of power.

### **Conclusion**

Facebook raises much more serious questions about privacy than simply the individual exposure of private details on Facebook. Facebook is a semi-private network, with semi-privatism as ideology. Some information on Facebook, like a name and a profile picture are public to everyone. Some information is visible only to friends. But some information is visible to Facebook itself, advertisers, the US government and probably other states as well.

With the rise of the Internet, and especially, online social networks, a lot of research has been focussing on privacy. Facebook is a very persistent medium and everything you post on it has the potential to be seen by a larger public than one originally assumes. As a result, many researchers argue that Facebook is dangerous and can create problems in one's life. However, most of the research has been focussing on individual users, ignoring the macro-context, such as capitalism, and thus, ignoring a much more important question in regards to privacy - what happens with our data?

As I tried to demonstrate users care about both social and institutional aspects of privacy. However, in the case of social aspect of privacy, they seem to know how to protect their profiles from potentially embarrassing exposure, but in the case of institutional privacy, users are not sure whether anything can be done to protect their data, and are reluctant to switch to a non-profit medium out of fear that friends won't follow them. However, this aspect of privacy is a real issue of

concern in the age of knowing capitalism, and more should be done to raise awareness about this aspect of privacy, in order to involve the users to respond.

Ultimately, Facebook raises questions about how far the surveillance society is going and about why and who has access to our data. The privacy question on Facebook also shows once more how externalised power operates on Facebook. Users have the power to adjust their individual privacy settings, but Facebook as a corporation violates privacy through surveillance.

## Chapter Nine: Democracy and Pluralism on Facebook

According to Poe (2011), the faster a medium is, the more dialogic its network will be, leading to democratized social practices. Poe explains it by the innate human desire for self-expression. If people can use a medium to express themselves to others, then they will do it and will create related social practices. Dialogicity, according to Poe, facilitates expression. He says that in dialogic networks we should expect to find democratic social practices and deliberativism as ideology. Deliberativism comes from the idea that everyone should speak for themselves.

As Poe argues, the Internet is a very fast medium. On it you can transmit and exchange messages very quickly and immediately access almost any information, which facilitates discussion. The Internet, according to Poe is a dialogic network; where you can send and respond to messages very quickly, and thus, it democratizes social practices, by which Poe means the encouragement of deliberative and consensual decision-making. On the Internet, as Poe says, people can easily talk and can be heard.

Poe also argues that the longer the range of a medium, both geographically and demographically, the more extensive its network and the more extensive a network is, the more social practices in it will be diversified. Extensiveness, as Poe argues, facilitates exploration, and if humans have the possibility to learn from the medium, then they will do it, leading to pluralism as an ideology. Pluralism is based on the idea that there are many kinds of people and things.

Poe argues that the Internet has a very extensive range, "more people are connected to more places at fewer removes more of the time on the Internet, than on, say, a telephone, radio, or TV web" (Poe 2011, p. 239).

The Internet, according to Poe has a global range and unexcelled coverage. And this facilitates diversity. People of different races, ethnicity, professions, and status can use the Internet and on the Internet you can post anything. "On extensive networks, strangers confront each other, learn from one another, and assimilate one another to their world views" (Poe 2011, p. 239). This, as Poe

argues, leads to 'transculturalism' which "might seem like a variation on Enlightenment 'citizen of the world' cosmopolitanism" (Poe 2011, p. 240).

However, whether the Internet does allow for diversification and democratisation is actually disputable as I will demonstrate in the next section. Even if everyone has the possibility to be heard on the Internet, it does not mean that this is indeed the case. The Internet is dominated by big corporations as is the case offline. The most popular news websites on the Internet and those, which receive the most clicks are Yahoo news, CNN, MSNBC, Google news, New York Times, Huffington Post, etc (EbizMBA 2013). All these sites belong to big corporations, whose main drive is profit. News are highly commercialised as is the case offline, only those news that are worth of publicity see their publication in press.

In the following section I am going to look at the potential of Facebook for increased democracy and diversification. How democratic is Facebook? Do we express our opinions on Facebook and have the possibility to make our voices heard? Can Facebook lead to a greater democracy?

### **Democracy and Facebook**

The concept of democracy is old. It comes from the Greek *dimos* (public) and *kratos* (rule), and implies that power should lie within the people. However, how the rule is exercised varies and democracy is often regarded as an abstract concept, which is fluid and evolving (Papacharissi 2010). Officially democracy is practiced in the majority of the world's countries, from 192 countries, 121 are electoral democracies.

However, democracy can be exercised differently from nation to nation. Thus, Fuchs (2008) identifies three traditions of democracy from which he derives three lines of thought in discussing digital democracy. Digital democracy can be defined as "a collection of attempts to practice democracy without the limit of time, space, and other physical conditions, using ICT or CMC instead, as an addition, not a replacement for traditional 'analogue' political practices" (Hacker and Van Dijk 2000, p. 1). Another definition of digital democracy says that digital democracy "can be defined as encompassing all the uses of information and communication technology (ICT) which might affect and change the functioning

of a democracy - especially the fundamental operations of expressing opinions, debating, voting, making decisions" (Catinat and Vedel 2000, p. 185).

Fuchs's concept of democracy is linked to how power is conceptualized. Thus, in the objective concept of power, power is based in coercive institutions that exercise the particular will of a group by commanding other groups and people. This concept of power is linked to representative democracy. In the subjective concept of power, power is productive and transformative and here people exercise power directly. This concept of power is linked to direct democracy.

In the dialectical concept of power, two concepts are linked, "power is a dialectical process in which human actors enter into social relationships that are, to certain degrees, competitive and cooperative in order to reach decisions so that decision-making structures emerge and are reproduced that enable and constrain further decision-oriented social practices" (Fuchs 2008, p. 225). This concept of power corresponds to grassroots democracy.

These three concepts of power are linked to three concepts of digital democracy or how democracy can be exercised on the Internet. Thus, the potential of the Internet for democratisation can be analysed through these three concepts. I mentioned already that Poe defines democratisation as the potential for deliberative and consensual decision-making, however, the concept of democratization is much larger. For instance, Welzel defines democratisation in three different ways: 1) the introduction of democracy in a non-democratic regime, 2) the deepening of the democratic qualities in given democracies, and 3) the question of the survival of democracy (Welzel 2008). All three aspects of democratisation are interlinked and "merge in the question of sustainable democratization, that is, the emergence of democracies that develop and endure. Democratization is sustainable to the extent to which it advances in response to pressure from within a society" (Welzel 2008, p. 75).

All three concepts of democracy are also interlinked. Thus, though the majority of democracies are representative democracies, many of them also have elements of direct and grassroots democracies. As was argued in other chapters, I view power as mostly centralised in the hands of the states and corporations, while also dispersed through many networks which became more fluid since we entered the age of post-Fordism. I also argued that this dispersed

or diffuse power operates as externalised power, creating more an illusion of freedom rather than a real possibility to make a social change. The aspects of externalised power can be seen in direct and grassroots democratic manifestations. We do not yet have a real grassroots democracy, because of the capitalism's power relations, but we also can't dismiss entirely the potential that the Internet offers because people do have the possibility to express themselves more by using the Internet and online social networks as the medium.

In the concept of representative democracy, democracy is a parliamentary system formed by elected parliamentarians who represent voters and who, based on majority votes, pass bills and regulations. Great Britain is a parliamentary democracy, while the United States is a presidential democracy.

Representative digital democracy is mainly based on top-down digital communication of governments and citizens and intergovernmental digital communication (Fuchs 2008). This involves political guest books, newsletters, chats, online conferences, e-mails to politicians, citizen information systems, online election campaigning, online policy proposals, etc.

Governments have been using the Internet and online social networks more and more in recent years. President Obama was quite successful in using Facebook and Twitter for his political campaign, but also in the UK in the wake of 2010 elections political candidates used Facebook and YouTube to respond to questions from the public in a digital online debate. This online debate was the first of its kind in a UK election and complimented the three TV debates in which political candidates took part. Also a page named Democracy UK on Facebook was created where people could post questions to candidates and participate in a debate (Facebook 2010).

These events show that online social networks can be used quite successfully for political campaigning and for distributing information from the governments as well as for allowing ordinary citizens taking part in a debate and joining a political discussion.

This, in principle, should contribute to democratisation, but the main criticism is that democratisation happens only when people are interested in politics and what is happening in the world.

The main problem which stems from this kind of democracy is the current organisation of power relations under capitalism, discussed previously, as well as the perceived general alienation of citizens in politics in Western countries. Voters vote less and participate less in political life. Some claim that democracy is in danger due to low voter turnouts in the US and Europe. "Democracy consists of cynical, apathetic, and disconnected electorates..." (Papacharissi 2010, p. 11). Or as Fuchs says: "Political problems today not only stem from a lack of democratic institutions in the world but also from a feeling of alienation that many people have about governing institutions that they feel don't represent their interests that well..." (Fuchs 2008, p. 235). In general it is viewed that the democracy is weakening due to the lack of interests from the part of citizens (Barber 2004, Stoker 2006a) and some point to decreased levels of participation in civil society and depleted sources of social capital (Putnam 1995).

Coleman, Morrison and Yates (2011) came to this same conclusion after having conducted a survey asking participants to comment on the efficiency of the Internet in political engagement. They point out to the fact that people have distrust in politicians in general and that there are "deep-seated suspicions that politicians are unwilling to listen to public voices, no matter what the form of communication" (Coleman, Morrison and Yates 2011, p. 226). As they say: "The fact that our participants consider the use of the Internet by politicians to be duplicitous is a damning indictment of the state of public confidence in political responsiveness. It is also a firm warning that forms of communication cannot overcome that which is social: namely, a lack of trust in the responsiveness of political institutions" (Coleman, Morrison and Yates 2011, p. 223).

The Internet and Facebook may have the potential to revive an interest in politics, especially when it is presented in an interactive way, when ordinary people have the opportunity to have their say. In this respect the Internet is often compared to the public sphere advanced by Habermas, and that "promotes free circulation and sharing of ideas based on information gained

through reading pamphlets and newspapers and feverish discussion in coffee shops" (Doyle and Fraser 2010, p. 221). Public spaces played an important role in the past in contributing to the creation of new forms of political organisations and were an open space for communication where everyone participating had an equal say. Historically, public spaces excluded women, workers and ethnic minorities, and this has been one of the main criticisms towards Habermas when he talked nostalgically and optimistically about public spaces. The Internet includes both men and women and everyone with Internet access can have an equal say, but the Internet can also be used by governments to spy on their citizens, and even if anyone can have a say on the Internet, it does not mean that everyone will be heard. Matthew Hindman in his book 'The Myth of Digital Democracy' (2009) demonstrates that it is still the big corporations and the main political parties who are the most visible on the Internet and who get the most clicks on the World Wide Web.

Another aspect which intervenes with the democratisation of the Internet is the commodification of the Internet itself and the prosumer commodity about which I talked previously. People who read Yahoo, Google and other main sites (which get most of the traffic on the Internet) are not only constantly bombarded with advertisements but also can be seen as free labour when they post comments and provide very useful information about themselves when they create a Facebook profile and later join a political discussion.

In the case of direct democracy, democracy is based on immediate decision-making of people (Fuchs 2008). Here, it is considered that as many decisions as possible should be discussed and acted upon directly by citizens. Many modern democracies have elements of direct democracy such as referenda. For instance, such countries as Switzerland, Italy, France, Ireland, Denmark, Australia and New Zealand have important mechanisms for direct democracy.

A plebiscitary system is a political system where political parties or leaders decide on which questions a referendum should be taken, how these questions should be presented and then citizens can vote on these questions. The main criticism of such a system is that it can easily be manipulated and that it can turn into totalitarianism.

Plebiscitary or direct concepts of digital democracy are mostly based on bottom-up digital communication of citizens and governments. This mainly involves online surveys, online polls, online voting and online referenda.

In the case of Facebook an example of direct digital democracy was a mock election which was held on Facebook prior to the UK elections in 2010. This was done in order to see the preferences of people in upcoming voting and also in order to encourage people to also vote on the election day.

Here again, the main criticism for democratisation potential stems from the fact that people in general are dissatisfied with politics. Also as was already mentioned, Facebook is mostly used for fun. Many click on the 'like' button without doing anything else about it. Those who are politically active offline are also active online, but those who are not interested in political issues outside of Facebook are unlikely to suddenly become interested in politics because of joining Facebook.

The concept of participatory or grassroots democracy is based on the notion that people are directly involved in the decision-making processes and participate fully in democratic processes. "Participation means that humans are enabled by technologies, resources, organizations, and skills to design and manage their social systems all by themselves and to develop collective visions of a better future so that the design of social systems can make use of their collective intelligence" (Fuchs 2008, p. 227). This concept of participatory democracy favours bottom-up approach where decisions in a social system are prepared and taken by all individuals. Participatory systems are based on self-organization, and which is "a system in which power is distributed in a rather symmetrical way, that is, humans are enabled to control and acquire resources such as property, technologies, social relationships, knowledge, and skills that help them in entering communication and cooperation processes in which decisions on questions that are of collective concern are taken" (Fuchs 2008, p. 227). In a participatory system participation is not limited to the state system but also involves culture, the economy, and the life world. "It is not limited to decision making; rather, it also includes processes such as producing and owning (economic), setting goals, forming knowledge, values, images and visions, communication, and self-realization (cultural)" (Fuchs 2008, p. 227).

As Bela A. Banathy commented participatory democracy is a dynamic process: "Participative democracy comes to life when we individually and collectively develop a design culture that empowers us to create, govern, and constantly reinvent our systems" (in Fuchs 2008, p. 228).

In a participatory democracy political life is part of everyday life, where active and knowledgeable citizens take active part in political communication, which is not limited to political elites. Here the civil society plays an important role. Civil society or civil sphere, as called by Jeffrey Alexander, is "a world of values and institutions that generates the capacity for social criticism and democratic integration at the same time. Such a sphere relies on solidarity, on feelings for others whom we do not know but whom we respect out of principle, not experience, because of our putative commitment to a common secular faith" (Alexander 2008, p. 4). The importance of civil society has been demonstrated by the increasing importance of non-governmental organizations and protest movements. "They can be understood as calls for a more participatory society wherein those affected by decisions are involved in decision-making processes. The fascination that these movements exert on many people is partly due to the fact that they make grassroots democracy vivid, noticeable, and sensible within a world of heteronomy and alienation" (Fuchs 2008, p. 228).

Political communication and cooperation in civil society "result in the emergence of a public sphere for political discourse and discursive, deliberative will formation" (Fuchs 2008, p. 229). The public sphere, according to Habermas, differed from the private sphere, as it was not limited to family and friends and where everyone could participate in expressing and forming public opinions. For Habermas the importance lies in communication, which is an important part of participation. "In participatory systems, communicative action is the process that allows civil society to form a discursive public sphere in which there is a reasoned, knowledgeable discussion" (Fuchs 2008, p. 229).

Digital participatory democracy is democracy which empowers individuals, and provides individuals with tools for changing society and organisations as they see fit and which gives them the opportunity to make their voice heard and where they can express their opinions and through these opinions trigger social change. These include online discussion boards, mailing lists, wikis, political

blogs, political chats, cyberprotest tools, online petitions and online protest campaigns (Fuchs 2008).

Thus, some researchers have been optimistic about the potential of the Internet for grassroots democracy. Manuel Castells speaks of an "empowerment for grassroots groups using the Internet as an instrument of information, communication, and organization", and argues that "the Internet can contribute to enhance the autonomy of citizens to organize and mobilize around issues that are not properly processed in the institutional system" (Castells 2004, p. 417).

Benjamin Barber says that: "The Net offers a useful alternative to elite-mass communication in that it permits ordinary citizens to communicate directly round the world without the mediation of elites - whether they are editors filtering information or broadcasters shaping information or facilitators moderating conversation. By challenging hierarchical discourse, the new media encourage direct democracy and so, as I suggested fifteen years ago, can be instruments of strong democracy" (in Fuchs 2008, p. 238).

Facebook has the potential to play an important role in grassroots democracy. People can create groups, join groups, engage in political discussions, form protest movements and post petitions.

People to whom I talked about Facebook mention the fact that Facebook permits them to learn about issues of which they otherwise would not be aware but also to post information for other users to see.

Peter, for instance, told me how he learned about 'Robin Hood Tax', an initiative to tax bankers, and about which he learned on Facebook:

"I joined a group a few months ago about the 'Robin Hood Tax'. I don't know whether you know about it, and it's just an idea that has been presented to everyone about taxing bankers, just a very small tax on every transaction between one bank and another bank and then putting that money into a public fund and I'd never heard anything about it and just got a message from the group one day saying, 'Check this video out', watched the video about it and then joined the group and then sent the link to lots of my friends as well and lots of them have joined it since then. And that's something that none of my friends were aware of before, and I wasn't aware of it before and now everybody is, so it's very useful for that" (Peter, face-to-face interview).

In this respect Facebook helps to raise awareness about some social issues and trigger people to take part in either discussing the issue or in trying to change certain things. Many people to whom I talked about Facebook mention that Facebook has the power to disseminate information to a lot of people and to distribute information quicker.

As Amelie told me:

"I've spoken to a few people recently who got in touch with me via Facebook whom I met through festivals. And they were like: 'oh, write down your name and we will meet you through Facebook', and there was this girl who was mostly using Facebook to send out messages to people, to invite them to raves, illegal parties. And she was saying that it makes it so much easier to get the message across now that people have Facebook. So, I suppose, it's empowering in the sense that it helps people to get together. And I think it's the social network thing: you tell your friend and they can tell their friends about what is going on and it will just spread out" (Amelie, face-to-face interview).

She mentions the controversial cancelling of Big Green Gathering, a green festival which was cancelled for unclear reasons and about which she could find information on Facebook:

"It can be really useful (Facebook). Definitely for organizing things, for getting people to get together, and also for things like Big Green Gathering, which was quite interesting as it was taken off, because people have gone off to the police website and made complaints on the police Facebook. Which was quite a strange thing anyway, the police having their own Facebook. It was quite weird. They went there and left messages and they have taken the whole debate off. And this was quite interesting, as when Big Green Gathering was cancelled and I was searching for answers why did it happen, I found the answers on Facebook which made me understand what was going on. I mean, there were different perspectives. But I could sort out things myself. So, it helped me to put my mind at rest and find out what people were thinking really. This was quite useful, and also helped to let people know who otherwise would never know that Big Green Gathering was cancelled. They would probably just go" (Amelie, face-to-face interview).

Similarly, on Facebook people can join various groups and discussions, create pages and post links to various sites.

The main obstacles for this potential of democratisation of Facebook are the same as with other forms of digital democracy.

First of all, there is commodification of the Internet and of 'the public sphere' as such. News about politics are presented together with advertisements. Public debates are transformed into commercial talk shows. Everything becomes

commercialised, including profiles on Facebook, which are sold to third-party advertisers. Facebook itself can be compared to a talk show, a society of the spectacle, where posts of friends and political discussions are mixed with ads and such applications as Farmville. It shows that social critique can become pretty banal. Putnam (1995) attributed the decline of civic engagement in America to the omnipresence of television that occupies most of our free time, which could instead be spent on political discussions and civic activity. This, according to him, leads to passive outlooks to life, where, instead of actively participating in public life, we spectate reality TV and endless advertisements. Facebook, which for many people has been replacing television, only follows the trend which favours passivity instead of an active outlook to life. I have already mentioned that we live in 'fast capitalism' where we assume that everything is available immediately, where we have little time meeting with friends and engaging in community life. However, as Benjamin Barber argues (2002), for real democracy 'slow down' is necessary. The characteristics of new technology, such as speed, simplicity, users' solitude, informational over wisdom and segmentation, make it that people, instead of reflecting and communicating with each other, prefer to sit in front of their computers and use it as entertainment.

He also argues that if the society as such were different, than the potential of new technologies would also be different. Most democratic countries are based on a capitalist model, where commercial interest plays the most important role. Most democracies are representative democracies, which are characterized by 'democratic paradox' - the impossibility of practicing direct democracy in mass societies (Papacharissi 2010). Thus, a model of representative democracy is adopted, where the public elects representatives to manage civic life and governance. It means that public opinion is aggregated. "This trend, which Herbst (1993) refers to as 'numbered voices', exchanges the individuality, detail, and authenticity of personal opinion on public affairs for a concentration of opinions that fit into predetermined question and answer sets reported in aggregation. The tendency to group and categorize public opinion, therefore, limits the opportunities for, and the scope of, discussion on public affairs, as citizens are not called upon to deliberate, but merely to report agreement or

disagreement with certain questions" (Papacharissi 2010, p. 14). According to Papacharissi, this results in growing public cynicism and disillusionment with politics and public issues.

The democratization has to start in offline life, and the Internet can be just a tool to assist changes elsewhere. It is the model of democracy and capitalistic society driven mostly by commercial interests which have to be changed. As long as the Internet will be dominated by big corporations (including Facebook) nothing will change. As Barber argues:

"Indeed, the current characteristics of the net technology that seem most vigorous reflect the stamp of the attendant culture on the technology. Yes, it has a potential for education and culture and horizontal communicative interaction, but its actuality is commercial; yes, it can encourage democracy and plural uses as well as competitive ownership, its reality today as defined by portals, software platforms and content is monopolistic. Yes, its technical character is open and accessible, but its actual use is as divisive and inegalitarian as the society around it. It cannot be other than the society that produced it" (Barber 2002, p. 2-3).

The second factor which intervenes with the potential for democracy is the use of technology as a means of surveillance, discussed already in the section on privacy. New technologies, including Facebook can be used for control, surveillance and also disinformation. Here this threat is interlinked with the previous factor. Facebook is ultimately a corporation, and Facebook makes the decisions about how Facebook is run, which data is stored and what it does with this data.

As Zollers says:

"The problem arises from the fact that all of the communication that takes place on SNSs (social online networks) is mediated through a proprietary and commercial system. The private corporations that own SNSs have control over the systems and thus can restrict, enhance, or even influence communication as they see fit...From a critical standpoint, it is important to acknowledge that although SNSs can encourage participatory democracy, they can also extend the structures of capitalism and further hegemonic ideas" (Zollers 2009, p. 611).

And finally, a third criticism advanced by hyper-realist school is that information technologies exacerbate the trend towards simulation rather than real life. We can argue that everything has become a spectacle including politics and daily life. Daily life is presented in such shows as MTV and reality TV, while politics are presented as a movie and have become a sort of entertainment -

infotainment. Images and sounds are preferred to meaningful conversations and debates. "A politician is now a commodity, citizens are consumers, and issues are decided via sound-bites and staged events" (Rheingold 1993, p. 285).

I have already argued that Facebook can be seen as reflecting the society of the spectacle where news from friends are presented in the format of reality TV, where entertainment comes from endless gossip and where comments from friends about important issues are presented along with Farmville and such applications as 'rate how hot I am.' I will elaborate it on it further in the next section.

### **Pluralism and Diversification**

The possibility to express oneself and the liberty to express one's thoughts and opinions in public is a vital feature for democratic order. The Internet, with its global reach and open access, is potentially a platform for expressing different opinions and views. However, the current threat for democratization and diversification of the Internet stem from the fact that the Internet is dominated by big corporations who decide how and what should be visible on the Internet and whose main concern is commercial profit.

Thompson (1995) in his analysis of the role of the media talks about two developments which characterise the media configuration today.

One development is "the growing concentration of resources in the media industries, leading to the formation of large-scale communication conglomerates with interests in a diversified array of media activities" (Thompson 1995, p. 238). This can be traced back to the early nineteenth century when new methods of production and distribution substantially increased the productive potential of the newspaper industry and this led to "the transformation of news and other media organizations into large-scale commercial concerns" (Thompson 1995, p. 238). The second development is the intensification of globalization which started in the middle of the nineteenth century. "With the development of submarine cable networks and, more recently, the deployment of integrated satellite and cable systems capable of transmitting large quantities of

information around the world, with the growth of transnational conglomerates which conduct their commercial activities in a global arena, and with an expanding global trade in information and communication products, the globalization of communication has continued unabated" (Thompson 1995, p. 239).

If before the main threat for individual liberty and freedom of expression was usually coming from the state, now it comes from the "unhindered growth of media organizations qua commercial concerns" (Thompson 1995, p. 239). As Thompson argues a *laissez-faire* approach to economic activity is not automatically leading to freedom of expression, since "an unregulated market may develop in a way that effectively reduces diversity and limits the capacity of most individuals to make their views heard" (Thompson 1995, p. 239). As Thompson demonstrates, the reality shows the opposite result. In Britain, for instance, the increasing circulation of newspapers in the first half of the twentieth century happened hand in hand with a decline in the number of published newspapers, leading to the fact that an increasing number of resources happened to be in the hands of large media conglomerates. As Thompson says: "Left to itself, the market does not necessarily cultivate diversity and pluralism in the sphere of communication. Like other domains of industry, the media industries are driven primarily by the logic of profitability and capital accumulation, and there is no necessary correlation between the logic of profitability and the cultivation of diversity" (Thompson 1995, p. 240).

The same is with the Internet, which is dominated by the presence of large commercial conglomerates. Even if the Internet allows for two-way communication, where in principle people can exchange their views and post all kinds of posts, these different views and opinions are usually lost in the commercial flow of the Internet.

"The Internet becomes, to a considerable extent, a part of a synoptical system, in as much as it is, to a substantial degree, dominated by powerful economic agents - from newspapers and television agencies to owners having economic capital to invest in sales of lucrative merchandise, including pornography. To the same degree, the structure becomes characterised by a one-way flow, from relatively few in control of economic capital, symbolic capital and technical know-how, to the many who are entertained and who buy the products" (Mathiesen 2004, p. 100).

For Mathiesen, the Internet is not an interactive two-way medium, but an interactive one-way medium, where the agenda is set by those who have economic, symbolic and technical capital. The Internet for Mathiesen is a system of silencing.

Another problem, apart from the highly commercial aspect of the Internet, for diversity and democratization, is that many voices are lost on the Internet in the cacophony of chatting voices and opinions. Without moderation of the public space that the Internet could potentially become, many people who try to express interesting and politically motivated opinions are confronted with cyberstalkers and simply bullying.

As Noveck argues: "In any given online discussion, the development of community is easily derailed by individuals pulling conversation off its fulcrum, typing, 'MARIA CALLAS IS CRAP!' in the midst of a focused, even fun, debate about the significance of opera as a musical form. There is a market absence of spaces for deliberative, independent, thoughtful dialogue among 'wired' citizens, confronting new ideas and people in the course of civil conversation" (Noveck 2004, p. 19).

Facebook has the same problem. In principle, its members can post links to any sites and express any opinions. However, all meaningful comments are often lost among such status updates as 'I am eating BLT for lunch,' or 'got pissed yesterday.' Those, who are interested in civil and political lives offline usually also try to take part in discussion forums on Facebook, but many groups are being closed down because of Facebook 'spoilors' - those who join the group and start putting absurd or irrelevant comments. I mentioned earlier the end of such a group on Facebook because one Facebook member would intervene in every discussion with bullying and ugly posts.

Apart from Facebook's 'spoilors' there is also the phenomenon of Facebook bullying, which is quite a worrisome manifestation. Several members told me about this trend. Consider, for instance, what Joanna told me on this account:

"I don't post offensive things online but I mean if someone posts something offensive that I find offensive then I will tell them that it's offensive and ask them to remove it. Recently there was somebody asking me for my phone number from Mexico, and I thought it was a scam, because there are a lot of

scams on Facebook and I joined a group and put comments on saying that I thought it was a scam...left it at that. I got flack for it from people and nasty messages telling me that I was a really heartless person. I didn't say anything negative about the guy who was asking for blood, all I said was that I thought it was a scam because there are so many of them on Facebook. Surely this is a fairly common blood group and he should be able to get a lot of blood from America. So I got backlash from it...but that's a part of it, where you'll ask a question and people will always take it the wrong way no matter where you are - whether you're in a cage or whether you're in the library, the lecture hall or a bus stop. Sometimes you'll ask a question and somebody will hear it wrong and react to what they heard and shout at you. And I didn't apologise for asking if it was a scam, I apologised for causing any offence because that wasn't my intention - all I was interested in was protecting people that I knew had been scammed in the past. The person who set up the group I had a conversation with and she was quite rude to me to start off with, because you know my Facebook picture is not very flattering. Her initial message to me was who do you think you are? You've upset everybody, blah, blah, blah, and go on a diet you fat and so..." (Joanna, face-to-face interview)

Bullying on Facebook happens all the time with people sometimes even posting negative comments following someone's death. Greg, a University Professor, told me about the killing of a 'Goth' girl and how on the page set up as her memorial people still managed to post offensive comments.

"...I supervised an undergraduate student's dissertation two years ago and she was doing a study of the reaction to the attack and death of a girl in Lancashire who was a 'Goth' and so she dressed differently from people in the area and some youths attacked her and her boyfriend one evening and she died in the event and the boyfriend survived, but only after some considerable injury. And the student did quite an interesting study of it; there were immediately Facebook pages set up for Sophie, which was the name of the girl who was killed, so it was a memorial, which clearly gave support and sympathy for people who needed it, and it's not that I have the slightest problem with it at all. What my student began to uncover were some of the motivations and some of the things that were going on possibly beneath the surface and one of the things that she began to come into contact with but didn't really follow up, was something that one could only describe as manipulation, the offensive side of it, with the parents of the dead girl having to read very unpleasant things being said about their daughter because in effect she dressed differently. Why should you have to read that your daughter is a 'whore' or a 'slag' because she chooses to dress differently?" (Greg, face-to-face interview)

There was also a story in the papers about a girl who was jailed for bullying another girl on Facebook. The girl in question said that she would kill another girl via her Facebook page (Daily Mail 2011).

Apart from bullying there is also such phenomenon as the creation of offensive pages. One such page was created shortly after the death of Raoul Thomas Moat, who had killed his ex-girlfriend, her new lover and seriously wounded a policeman. The page was created that glorified the murderer and attracted 38,000 fans. Many wrote tributes to Raoul on the page saying such things as :'love got the better of you' and praising him for being someone who "would rather die like a soldier than live like a coward" (Lawless 2010).

How to explain these phenomena on Facebook?

As Aric Sigman (2010), a psychologist who studied the biological effects of social networking, explains "the online outpouring reflected a new and alarming phenomenon - 'recreational, virtual grief', and that such sites as Facebook are often used 'to amplify and elevate views which in real world we would all feel are not constructive or healthy" (Lawless 2010).

However, the number of flowers and cards near the house of the murderer testify that Facebook and the Internet in general only reflect and amplify, because of their visibility, what is happening in the offline world already. Bullying is happening in the offline world as well, but also many people support ugly causes and demonstrate unhealthy behaviour in offline reality as well. The Internet, because of its public or semi-public structure, only makes this phenomenon more pronounced, but it exists already in our daily reality, regardless of the Internet and Facebook. As Joanna, who told me about bullying on Facebook continues:

"...It just seemed dodgy to me, I didn't mean to cause any offence but I was just - you know, I've seen so many scams in the past - oh and don't call me fat, that's just rude and abusive and I will block you and report you for it. And she sent me a message back saying a lot of people were upset and misunderstood what you were saying and I'm sorry for calling you names. But by that time I'd blocked her anyway, so I'd got her last message just after I'd blocked her - she obviously sent it as I was blocking her, and then I've not heard anything from anybody, apart from this little boy who for two or three days sent me a message telling me I'm fat and ugly and I should just go and kill myself for being so horrible. I think it's connected to that, because there's no other reason to get messages from a random person, so I reported and blocked them as well. But you know, I walk out of my house and get people insulting me...so people insulting me on Facebook isn't going to bother me. There are tools on Facebook to stop people shouting at you, being rude to you, nasty and everything...it's called blocking

the person, so...I'm not so worried about being bullied on the Internet..."  
(Joanna, face-to-face interview)

Quite a few other people told me about the bullying phenomenon on Facebook and the Internet in general. I was 'bullied' myself on one occasion. But as with Joanna, it wouldn't stop me from using Facebook or the Internet.

### **But is there a potential?**

However, while it is important to look at the problems of democratisation and pluralism on Facebook, it is also necessary to mention again its enormous potential for both democratisation and diversification.

I mentioned the fact that since Facebook is mostly used for fun, important news is often lost in the stream of the likes of Farmville.

One of the users told me the following on this account:

"Well, there was a group that started up and got a very large number of members saying, 'We don't want the Lib-Dems to make a deal with the Conservatives'. This was its title. Obviously, that wasn't successful in its aim but, you know, you get these kind of things and I think there is a potential there, but it needs more than potential to actually happen. They're a lot of groups like that, but they co-exist with all other things like Farmville!" (Lynne, face-to-face interview)

While I was writing this thesis I often asked questions on my wall about how my 'friends' perceive Facebook. I remember I once posted an important question about what did people do on Facebook and whether they thought it could bring about some social change. I was having a very interesting discussion related to this question, with some of my friends sharing quite deep and important thoughts and then suddenly a friend of mine joined the discussion by asking the following: "I am more interested to know WHY you are my age but you have absolutely no wrinkles?!" This question followed a comment from another user who shared some very serious observations about Facebook.

And this is what Facebook is basically about. Important political news is presented together with the latest advert from L'Oreal. One friend posts an important update about the Occupy Movement while another writes what she is eating for lunch. But whether it is bad or good is open for discussion. Yes, the comment of my friend on my discussion about Facebook can appear as

useless, as a demonstration of even some sort of sabotage to a serious discussion. But if we look at it from the angle of popular culture, this comment can actually appear as 'interesting' and thought provoking. It was at least for me, because as it happens, I am obsessed with all kinds of beauty products and can discuss this topic for ages. And that is why I actually replied to my friend and we had an interesting discussion about anti-ageing creams, etc. The discussion did go back eventually to the topic of Facebook, but the comment of my friend, if anything, allowed to inject some 'fun' into a serious topic.

This fun aspect of Facebook is actually what allows people to read some news with the means of Facebook. Maybe indeed people are more aware about certain topics because they are presented in an interesting and entertaining way? And maybe there is nothing wrong indeed with simply clicking the 'like' button if for some people it is the first step to some sort of political engagement?

Applications like Farmville, while going hand in hand with some political news and groups actually reflect the offline world as well. It is impossible to be politically engaged all the time and people in their daily life have fun along with some civic engagement. As Lynne, a participant continues in regards to Farmville:

“...But you get this in everyday life, each of us is embedded in lots of networks and has potential contacts and ties to all kinds of things, and we spend an awful lot of time just in chat and discussing things and chatting about things and yes, gossip. And we spend then, some other pieces of time where, quite actively, we're trying to do something, sometimes trying to make a difference; sometimes only a difference related to ourselves or our house or planning a vacation or something and sometimes dealing with local issues on a much deeper level” (Lynne, face-to-face interview).

There was an interesting discussion in ICTs and Society group (hosted by Fuchs, [www.icts-and-society.net](http://www.icts-and-society.net)) about the democratic potential of Facebook. The participation in the discussion by prominent scholars in the field and their sometimes opposing views to each other demonstrate once again the polemic around this subject. It shows that the question about the democratic potential of the Internet, and Facebook, is open to discussion, that it is perhaps still early days to proclaim that it is indeed democratic, and if it is democratic, opinions are divided about the extent of its democratic potential. The view of academics on

the subject also depends on the 'school' they are coming from. For instance, the two scholars (Jodie Dean and Andrew Feenberg) who participated in the debate and presented different opinions about the topic of how democratic is Facebook are positioned in different sociological fields. Jodie Dean (coming from the point of view of critical political economy) argues in her works (2010, 2012) that new online mediums, such as blogging, and online social networks capture us simultaneously in enjoyment, production and surveillance. The new technology, according to Dean creates an illusion that we can talk and which is a natural human desire, but at the same time we buy all the new gadgets which allow us to talk (smartphones, computers, tablets, etc) and thus, support capitalistic production, while also ending up being surveilled.

Andrew Feenberg, on the other hand (coming more from the point of view of classical critical cultural studies, when they were not that different from critical political economy), bases his studies (2002, 2009) on the concept of a dialectical technological rationality, where social critique of technology is combined with empirical studies and micro analysis of the popular culture. Thus, according to Feenberg, the new technology has a big potential for democratisation, provided that there is no exclusion in the participation in it.

"What human beings are and will become is decided in the shape of our tools no less than in the action of statesmen and political movements (Feenberg 2002, p. 3).

Below are their contributions to the discussion on ICTs & Society group about the democratic potential of Facebook prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> ICTs and Society conference in Uppsala in May 2-4 2012 (<http://www.icts-and-society.net/events/uppsala2012/>). As Jodi Dean (Professor of Political Science in Columbia University) argues in response to what she calls 'a one-sided celebration of the politics of networked media' there are a number of reasons to be sceptical about the democratic potential of Facebook. Here she lists them:

1. The turn out rate for mass emailings/FB invitations is lower than with direct contact.
2. Reliance on electronic media means less direct involvement with people (so, instead of going door to door and building knowledge and connections first hand, one relies on a database of phone numbers).

3. Capacities for organizing diminish: people think that all that is necessary is a FB page.
4. Political action becomes synonymous with awareness.
5. Political action becomes seamlessly integrated with consumption and entertainment; the content may be radical but the form is not" (Jodi Dean 2012, at <http://lists.icts-and-society.net/pipermail/discussion-icts-and-society.net/2012-February/000093.html>).

But then follows a reply from Andrew Feenberg (Canada research chair in Philosophy of Technology in the School of Communications, Simon Fraser University), where he emphasises the positive aspects of the medium for democracy building and social change:

"I want us to consider a naive observation about social media. A recent New Yorker article dismissed the political uses of the Internet by contrasting the courage required to participate in a sit-in in the 60s and the triviality of signing an online petition. This sort of critique of the Internet mistakes completely its significant civic role which is communicative. It enables discussion and makes it cheap and fast to assemble masses. I had a student write a biting critique of the destructive effects of the Internet on civic culture, only to organize a successful and quite large "Slut Walk" in Vancouver shortly afterwards in just a week using the Internet. I went just to tease her and asked her if she knew what mimeo machines and telephone trees were. She had no idea. I told her this would have been her communication system when I was organizing demonstrations. So, of course the Internet does not "make" revolutions. But it plays a role in them just as did Khomeini's cassettes or the leaflets passed around in the May Events in 1968. A total government and corporate takeover of the Internet might well reduce it in the future to the abject state of television, but until that happens let's celebrate its positive role where we find it" (Andrew Feenberg 2012, at <http://lists.icts-and-society.net/pipermail/discussion-icts-and-society.net/2012-February/000087.html>).

And here is another interesting comment from Ben Klass (a MA student at University of Manitoba, Canada):

"In response to Jodi's thoughts, we might look at Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* as a reference. From his point of view, a decline in 'social capital', with regard to democratic involvement (p170-177), has been a real trend, at least in America, over the past few decades. If we accept this, then I would argue that an increased engagement in "any kind of politics" is laudable. If we're interested in a healthy, deliberative democracy, then a forum for promoting awareness, at least, but more importantly discussion amongst people holding various and often contradictory political positions is desirable. This is of course leaving aside the fact that Facebook is exploitative of "knowledge labor" (if we accept this concept), but that may well be beside the point in this case.

I'm not sure exactly how to respond to Jodi's first point, that "turn out" is less visible on Facebook than it is with regard to "direct contact". I would argue that, with regard to the second, that participating in a discussion, even as basic as commenting on a post or clicking 'like' does itself constitute more, not less direct engagement. The use of "social media" and the Internet in general streamlines the process of being directly involved with others in terms of discussion, argument and contact in general..." (Ben Klass 2012, at <http://lists.icts-and-society.net/pipermail/discussion-icts-and-society.net/2012-February/000093.html>).

This sort of discussion shows that Facebook and the Internet are a contested terrain and that absolute generalisations are difficult at this point. Indeed we have to wait and see whether the commercial aspect won't take totally over. But until then, such political events as the Arab Spring and, more recently, the elections in Russia, show that Facebook can be used for political gathering and for social change. But would Facebook allow the same civic engagement if it happened in Western Europe and would endanger the political status-quo?

## Conclusion

According to Poe's theory, Facebook is a dialogical medium and therefore, should promote democratised social practices. Also, based on his theory, Facebook is a very diversified medium because of its extensive range, and therefore, it promotes pluralism where everyone can have a say.

As I demonstrated in this section, Facebook does indeed offer more choice in regards to news and anyone, in principle, could start a serious political debate on the network. As some recent political events show, Facebook and other online social networks (such as Twitter) were used quite effectively in order to precipitate social change in some countries.

However, the main criticisms for democratisation and pluralism on Facebook and problems with it stem from the fact that Facebook is situated in a capitalistic society where profit is the main driving force. Facebook belongs to a corporation which collects and stores our data and which can decide how Facebook is run. Facebook is situated in a society where people are, in general, dissatisfied with politics and civil life. Facebook is situated in a society where people prefer entertainment and fun to being actively engaged in public life. While, the potential for democratisation and pluralism is there, the Internet is still mostly dominated by big corporations and main political parties, and of course, Facebook is a corporation itself. In case people would decide to use Facebook to overthrow capitalism, would Facebook ever allow it?

## **General Conclusion**

In this thesis I analysed Facebook both as a corporation and as a site used by millions of users for all kinds of purposes on a daily basis. I created a dialectic between the discussion of Facebook as a part of capitalism and of its 'ordinary' usage, as part of popular culture and everyday life. I also incorporated the techno-deterministic discourse, represented by Marshall Poe in order to show that the relationship between technology and society is a dialectical one and while some properties of a medium can indeed influence certain social practices, it is the current structure of the society which determines the final use.

One of the underlying goals of the thesis was a reconciliation of critical political economy and classical cultural studies to build on critical media/cultural studies by using Facebook as a case study. Critical media/cultural studies focus on both macro and micro contexts and employ a dialectical analysis in order to study a phenomenon. Thus, Facebook served as an example to study how a particular cultural form reflects, operates and is used in the age of informational capitalism, known for its service-for-free model where users are lured by the promise of a free service while ending up working for the corporation behind.

So, what can we say about such a phenomenon as Facebook based on critical media/cultural studies and coming back to my research questions outlined in the introduction?

### **1. Facebook acting as corporation within the capitalistic system**

As I showed in this thesis Facebook is first of all a capitalistic corporation pursuing profit. Facebook is based in informational capitalism, employing a new logic of service for free model, where we sign up for fun and entertainment and end up working for the company.

The fact that the network was conceived by students whose initial idea was to connect with fellow students and share what was happening in their lives, raises

questions as to whether all creativity under capitalism is eventually channelled into a profit-making machine.

Facebook, by its structure, reflects the post-fordist economy. It is an economy which is both a gift and commodity economy. On the one hand, Facebook offers a free service to its users, but on the other hand, Facebook uses its users by turning them into a commodity it can sell. Users, while 'having fun' on Facebook, provide content and data to the network which then makes profit out of it. It can be argued that Facebook exploits its users, and the power of users within the network, while being diffuse at a first glance, is limited by the surveillance aspect and the fact that users' personal data is exploited for commercial reasons. Facebook's expanded privacy policy only clearly shows that all data that is provided on Facebook, as well as the data which has nothing to do with the network, is collected, processed, analysed and then resold to third parties. There is also a clear danger that this data will eventually be sold to secret services and the police. Therefore, I called the power of users within the network '*externalised*' power, and which highlights how the power operates in the age of soft capitalism. In liquid modernity we got the illusion that we became more fluid and free, but in reality, however, we are being exploited more than ever by corporate players, who employ increasingly surveillance as a tool of their economic, political and social power.

The fact that billions of users sign up to the network without reading or questioning its privacy policy reinforces the normalisation aspect of the surveillance. We live in a surveillance society, where it becomes increasingly acceptable that our data is collected and where people stop opposing it. The current threat to society is that the surveillance will become an acceptable practice without us actively resisting it. Facebook is a perfect reflection of the surveillance society. And while it offers a fun service and allows us to connect, it also watches us and uses us. Users of Facebook work for the network for free, and while many of them love Facebook and spend a considerable time on it, we can't call something a 'wonderful tool' when in fact it exploits us.

The same applies to the democratic potential of Facebook. Facebook increases the possibility for self-expression and for spreading more news and organising

all kinds of groups. However, democracy is linked to power and autonomy and as I showed in this study, Facebook undermines our autonomy by violating our privacy. It is difficult to envision a better democracy in a society where real power is increasingly in the hands of corporations and surveilling states and where citizens feel alienated and not interested in what is happening on the political level.

## **2. Facebook as part of popular culture**

However, as I argued in the thesis we should not overlook the positive aspects of the network either. Facebook after all, is nothing without its users. It is true that Facebook exploits its users, but users, while logging in the network, do not necessarily consider themselves as being exploited (which might be a problem!), but derive numerous benefits from using the network. Based on the sample of my interviews, I couldn't generalise the usage of Facebook, but from what some users told me and also based on previous research and observation, including my own experience with Facebook, the network is useful and 'fun' in many respects. Facebook allows us to reconnect with lost friends, revive a friendship, help when someone feels lonely or depressed, gives us the opportunity to share with our friends some important moments in our lives, have fun and express one's creativity and identity. As I argued in this thesis, Facebook imposes on us a certain categorisation, which limits self-expression and creativity, but users find their own ways to overcome the Facebook's structure (like profiles) in order to express themselves in a creative way. On many occasions users try to make out of Facebook their own art and look at it as a cultural resource to be used. There are numerous examples of 'détournement' within the network where users reflect about the culture around them and turn it into art and creativity. The user of Facebook, it can be argued, emerges also as a 'craft consumer' who reworks Facebook, has fun with it and makes it its own. Yes, Facebook is a corporation using its users, but Facebook also fulfils many other positive functions, which show that users, while being used, derive some utility from using the network. As with many other cultural

forms in the age of the 'soft capitalism' there is a tension between the restraints that capitalism imposes on us and popular culture. People are caught in the current status-quo but they also resist it, often in a playful way. Facebook sets a stage, which lures us further and further into the walls of the dominant structure and pushes us to accept the surveillance society, but users try to resist it as well, especially when they know what is happening.

However, as I tried to show in this thesis, while users do create their things on Facebook and also create situations and forms of resistance, the real power belongs to Facebook as a corporation, which has a final say in how the network is run. The fact that users see Facebook as their 'friend' is actually a problem because users log in there and share intimate moments of their lives, which are then processed, analysed and sold by Facebook. Therefore, I call a Facebook user an *empathetic worker*, a sort of valorised badaud, which experiences feelings and emotions while on Facebook and at the same time works for the corporation itself.

Here is a graph to position the Facebook user in regards to critical media/cultural studies:

*User in the age of Informational Capitalism*

<b>Celebratory Cultural Studies</b>	<b>Critical Political Economy</b>	<b>Critical Media/Cultural Studies</b>
Active user/ craft consumer	Prosumer/playbour/produser	<i>Empathetic Worker</i>

### 3. Properties of the network

Similarly we should not overlook the properties of the network and the potential they can offer. It can be argued that some properties of Facebook influence some societal changes. However, these changes are happening because of other social factors and a macro-context in place.

For instance, Facebook, by having some dynamics and characteristics, such as its persistent nature and the fact that all information on it can be accessed either at a later stage or by some users for whom this information was not intended in the first place, is influencing how we behave in a semi-public environment and how we present our identity. My argument has been that Facebook creates a new social context, Facebook context, raising such questions as how to behave when different audiences have access to our profile, whom to include as friends and how to build one's profile, which often leads one to rethink one's social identity. The semi-public nature of the network makes us also vulnerable to the critique from others and on Facebook, where different social contexts often collapse, users have to monitor their behaviour in order to avoid making a 'faux-pas'. Thus, due to its properties Facebook leads us to reconsider questions about the changing notion of privacy, about identity and about behaviour in semi-public spaces. However, while some properties of the network influence certain practices, Facebook ultimately reflects what is happening offline. The semi-public nature of the network can be linked to the rise of the celebrity culture and the fact that new media, such as the Internet and television led us to rethink how we behave when a middle-region appears and opened the possibility to have 'fifteen minutes' of fame also for ordinary people and not only celebrities. Analysing privacy on the network from the angle that personal information revelation is dangerous in itself misses totally the rise of the celebrity culture and the changing notion of privacy in the current age. Facebook can be compared to the 'society of the spectacle' of Debord. It can be said that we live in an 'interview society', where it became fashionable to reveal some aspects of our private lives. On Facebook the everyday becomes an entertainment, it becomes visual and sensational.

Facebook is a part of culture and everyday life and in this respect it reflects our offline world. Through the analysis of Facebook, one can attempt to analyse the society as such. Many so-called 'celebratory' studies of Facebook and the Internet in general focus only on the user and dismiss societal aspects as not relevant. However, Facebook is a perfect example which encompasses at the same time both negative and positive aspects of the Internet usage and in doing so, can be seen as a 'miniature' society online.

And this is what Facebook is ultimately about. Facebook simply reflects the capitalistic society around us. We are exploited even when we have fun and continue working for capitalism during time assigned for leisure.

### **Further questions to explore**

This research was done in order to show how a new medium functions in the age of informational capitalism. I tried to demonstrate that the current macro-context exploits and uses us even through what can be considered as fun and entertaining. Facebook taken at a face value could provide numerous benefits, such as finding lost friends, communicating with existing friends, self-expression, discussing politics, etc, etc. However, all these benefits are erased by the fact that Facebook is a capitalistic corporation which uses us. In order to have the benefits that an online social network could offer, we should have more incentives to switch to alternative non-profit platforms such as Diaspora.

Currently there are some changes being made on a political level, especially by the European Commission in order to strengthen the privacy of individuals when they are online. The European Commission proposed a comprehensive reform of data protection rules, where a single platform would be implemented across all member states and where unified rules would ensure a greater individual protection. Also in the UK, such organisations as Media Reform Coalition ([www.mediareform.org.uk](http://www.mediareform.org.uk)) work to promote more democratic forms of media ownership and increasing public interest in media.

All this is very important, considering also the latest developments where it emerged that the US government has been collecting data on us, but more needs to be done for increased transparency and in order to give the power

back to ordinary people. As I demonstrated in this study, the Internet operates through externalised power, and any real power is possible only when we will see more non-profit platforms on the net, supported through the funding and showing that not everything needs to be commercialised.

In order to strengthen the privacy of individuals we also need to distinguish between individual and institutional aspects of privacy, as I discussed in this study. Institutional aspect of privacy could be protected by the European Union and Nation States, while individual privacy aspect should be incorporated into the courses at schools and universities, so that individuals know how to navigate the Internet from the moment they start using it.

For my on research agenda I am interested in how informational capitalism functions in general and would love to do another case study.

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# Appendices

## Data Collection

My data is based on 17 face-to-face interviews, ethnography on Facebook, and 5 online interviews. Ethnography included discussion on and analysis of 3 Facebook groups, various discussions with my friends on my Facebook profile and observation and quotes from some of my friends on the network.

Here are the graphs of the participants. All names are changed into pseudonyms and some participants were reluctant to tell their age and therefore, I include an approximate age.

### Participants in face-to-face interviews

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Charlotte	24	PhD student
Joanna	46	Artist
Tom	22	PhD student
Mark	54	Teacher
Amelie	25	PhD student
Laura	Around 25	PhD student
Peter	22	Writer/Freelancer
Samuel	Around 35	Librarian
Lynne	Around 50	Teacher
Sebastian	52	IT specialist
Richard	55	Researcher
Serge	25	PhD student
Laura	Around 40	Researcher
Rachel	40	Teacher
Greg	Around 60	Professor

Mina	25	PhD student
Robert	26	Freelancer

Participants in online interviews

Name	Age	Occupation
Tim	24	Undergraduate student
Daniel	38	Cameraman
Dan	45	Librarian/Musician
Carol	35	Financial analyst
James	27	Works in sales

Ethnography was done from October 2008 till January 2012. It was mainly done to form my own impressions and opinions, without using directly any data I was coming across (unless specifically asked for permission). I was mainly observing what my friends were doing on Facebook, in order to understand the motivations behind using Facebook better. I was also observing my own actions on Facebook: how I was building the profile, which pictures I was uploading and why, and my statuses updates. Occasionally I would also ask my friends some questions about their Facebook usage on my 'wall' and I used a couple of quotes in this thesis, with the permission of my friends. My profile is private and therefore, no one can be identified.

I would also participate in different groups on Facebook and posted a question on one group about Facebook usage to which I got many replies. I used some replies in my thesis.

For the ethnography I used two separate journals where I was recording my thoughts on the subject. I would first write down my impressions and then try to

build some themes around them and only afterwards, would try to connect it to theory.

Because, my friends on Facebook are friends and not participants in my research, it was important that I would write down just general impressions, without analysing a particular action of a friend, apart from specific occasions, when I would write to a friend and ask whether I could use a certain status update in my thesis.

For groups, as outlined in the methodology chapter I would select them based on my own interests and would go for subjects which seemed more relevant for my research. The three main groups which I used were: 'Facebook and Foucault', 'Discussions on Facebook' and 'Art on Facebook', with two of the groups ('Facebook and Foucault', and 'Discussions on Facebook') now being closed.

The ethnographic element of my thesis allowed me to be immersed in the subject and it contributed as a result to the structure of the thesis. As an active user of Facebook myself, I could not ignore the point of view of the user, something which I tried to emphasise in the thesis. I needed to analyse Facebook as a capitalistic organisation, but I also needed to 'catch' the opinion of a user on the matter. The observation of myself and of my friends on Facebook allowed me to include the element of popular culture and see how people make an art of what is at their disposal.

For my face-to-face interviews, a snow-ball technique was used. I interviewed people of different generations (the age varied from 19 to 60) and different backgrounds. I also tried to interview a couple of people who used Facebook rarely, so that opinions of different users could be reflected. I had quite a few PhD students in my sample (as a PhD student myself it was, of course, much easier, to 'recruit' among my colleagues), but the attempt was not to generalise but to form opinions and to reflect on what people think of Facebook, with a particular attempt to get some stories, personal narratives. This was done because my research has been qualitative, but also in order to achieve a certain type of writing; - I wanted it to be engaging and interesting. With online interviews I sent several questionnaires to my participants along with the development of my research. My questions changed during the analysis and

therefore, to some of my participants I sent some new questions. With online interviews the process was ongoing, which helped me a lot for my analysis.

Face-to-face interviews took place from January 2009 until September 2010. I tried not to interview everyone at once as I would analyse each interview for themes and then change my questions accordingly. However, while there was always a list with some prepared questions, I never really followed it, as I found that I was getting much more information from interviews by simply listening and by forming my questions depending on what was said. I wanted stories around Facebook, to see what was important for every person in relation to Facebook. However, by the end of the interviewing process, it was obvious that there were a lot of common themes, like the aspect of surveillance on Facebook, friendship, usage of Facebook in relation to acceleration of life in late capitalism, privacy issue, impression management, etc. I was glad that I did not follow a very strict protocol with my questions as people were opening up much more when the interview was flowing more as a conversation rather than a formal interview. As a result I ended up with quite fascinating 17 deep narratives around Facebook and it was important to reflect the stories in my thesis. This was the reason why I decided not to use the coding process such as NVIVO, but organised the analysis around my own coding. I wrote a narrative for each interview and then searched for common themes for all other interviews. You can see two examples of my interview analysis further in the appendices.

For each interview there was a very rigorous consent form, which I would send to each participant prior to the interview. I would explain again the purpose of my research at the beginning of each interview and with some of participants I would continue discussion after the interview. To some of my participants I sent samples of my text with analysis to receive their comments.

Since 2008 when I presented my first research proposal, my research goals and questions changed, influenced mainly by the material I was getting from interviews. Facebook is nothing without its users, and I wanted to reflect this in my thesis.

My first proposal, as discussed in the methodology chapter was focussing on impression management and the relation of Facebook's usage to the offline life. When I started working on my thesis, the analysis of online social networks was

dominated by 'celebratory' cultural studies, and I struggled for a year or so, because I knew that something was missing if I simply analysed the usage on Facebook. I stumbled by accident on one of the books by Christian Fuchs, without knowing that he was a leading academic in the field of critical political economy, and knew immediately that I needed a similar analysis in my own work. Therefore, my attention shifted towards the analysis of Facebook in relation to capitalism, but since I also wanted to incorporate the point of view of the user, I decided to name my approach 'critical media/cultural studies', where I borrowed the term from Douglas Kellner. I found it important to emphasise the fact that while Facebook as a corporation uses and exploits us, Facebook also plays a very important part in the daily lives of its users and changes how we view privacy, friendship and social identity.

### **Self-Involvement**

As mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, my own involvement with Facebook played a significant role in the analysis. I was 'immersed' in the field even before starting this thesis, and this was the reason I decided to do a PhD around the subject. During a year that I was a member of Facebook, prior to doing a thesis, I connected with most of my friends, joined and left numerous groups, made a few online friends and was in general fascinated by the phenomenon. Living in Brussels at that time and often lonely in the evening, I would spend ages on Facebook, talking to friends and sometimes strangers, having a glass of wine and feeling that I was 'connected'. There was something in Facebook which made my life easier but which also triggered a lot of questions on my mind: how real is this communication? Am I practicing some sort of narcissism when I upload my pictures? Is it harmful that I sit at home and talk to my computer instead of going out and making friends in real life?

I was so 'hooked' by Facebook that I wrote a PhD proposal around it and received a bursary to do the study on Facebook. My initial interest lay in connecting our offline to our online worlds and vice-versa, but this focus shifted dramatically when I started to read what was written on the subject and when I started to interview my participants. There was something missing in the techno-optimistic analysis of the network and I started to look at the macro aspect of Facebook. Situated within capitalism Facebook started to emerge as

something different than a wonderful tool to stay in touch and this led me to refocus my study into the analysis of both macro and micro aspects of Facebook. I wanted to reflect on Facebook as a corporation pursuing profit but I also wanted to catch the opinions about it from people who used it. And I also wanted to incorporate my own experience with the network.

## Interview analysis

### Interview with Charlotte

(First Interview when the focus was on online and offline connection and impression management).

### Introduction

It is Tuesday and in one hour I am having an interview with Charlotte . I am sitting at my desk at University and in order to have the interview I just have to walk for two minutes to another building to meet Charlotte. Charlotte is another PhD student and we met through the MA course in social sciences. I already see one problem coming: is Charlotte going to be entirely sincere with me regarding her Facebook usage? After all, we are colleagues, and impression management could be an issue.

I find this very thought about impression management funny. Because it is actually one of the themes I am exploring for my PhD study, by looking at an online social network (Facebook) as one of the social encounters and studying identity performance through Goffman's dramaturgy, among other things.

But while I dwell upon impression management and the fact that I am going to have an interview with another PhD student, my thinking shifts towards a broader context of the interview itself. Here I am, doing a PhD in the UK, originally being from Russia, having lived in four different countries, and preparing to talk with a girl who is originally from Manchester. Who would have thought that I would be in this situation (quite pleasant I must admit), even fifteen years ago? When I was in Russia, sure that I would stay in my native country for the rest of my life, knowing only French from foreign languages and not only having not heard about Internet, but also not knowing what a mobile phone is at that time. And now, fifteen years later, I am in Sheffield, having learned other languages and keeping in touch with my friends via Facebook, the very network I am studying.

This brings me to another thought. Facebook has not only allowed me to keep contacts with my friends, it also changed my life. In a way that when I was working as a headhunter in Brussels and used the network for my job I became

so interested in looking at how different people present themselves on Facebook that I developed a PhD project around it.

However, now, three months after I started my PhD I realize that I am interested in not 'how' (how people present themselves on Facebook), I am interested in 'why'. Why do people use this network? What is it for them, and most importantly, what difference does it make in a broader context of our society, which, as some scholars claim, is undergoing profound change?

The fact that our society is changing, is undeniable. Especially, the use of information technologies is affecting the way we are living. Some call shifts in contemporary society 'late modernity' (Giddens), some 'liquid modernity' (Bauman), and other classify it as 'postmodernism' (Gergen). In the later category especially, many scholars (Baudriallard, Kroker and Cook) claim a radical discontinuity in the way the society is living and in expression of our identity. Others, however (like Habermas and Callinicos) deny a radical rupture and emphasise the continuities between modernity and the present time (Best and Kellner, 1991).

For a while, and especially in the beginning of my study I tended to agree with the first view: that we are living in a totally different time. After all, if not thanks to information technologies, I would not be able to study Facebook and live in Sheffield at this moment. I also tended to agree with Turkle and Reinghold, who claimed that the sense of belonging and community is undergoing a profound change. As Turkle mentions in one of her studies: "Many of the institutions that used to bring people together – a main street, a union hall, a town meeting – no longer work as before. Many people spend most of their day alone at the screen of a television or a computer. Meanwhile, social beings that we are, we are trying (as Marshall McLuhan said) to retribalize (1962). And the computer is playing a central role. We correspond with each other through electronic mail and contribute to electronic bulletin boards and mailing lists: we join interest groups whose participants include people from all over the world. Our rootedness to place has attenuated" (Turkle 1995, p. 178).

However, as my stepdad, who after having looked at my initial reflections on Facebook, has said: "Every generation claims change", and I gave it an additional thought. True, information technologies affect the way we live, but do

they really change our lives? And is community really undergoing a profound change? After all, as much as we tend to spend time on emails and chats on computer, nothing has yet changed a face-to-face meeting. As much as I love seeing what my best friend is doing in Amsterdam by looking at her pictures on Facebook, I am planning to take a plane in two-months' time to Amsterdam to see her in person. My best friend from Russia is sending me an email every day, but currently she deals with a visa at the UK embassy in Moscow to come and see me here. Nothing is more pleasant than meeting a friend for a coffee in a café when I have free time, and one of the friends I made through a Facebook, became a 'real' friend only after we had met in person.

On the other hand, the society is undergoing change. I tend to agree with Baudrillard who puts postmodern condition in what he names as 'hyperreality' (Baudrillard 1983). For him postmodernism is about electronic media.

Television, especially, can take us to any different place at any given moment of time. Simulation, contrasting images, absence of space, supplant the reality. In this society "the self, in particular, is nowhere and everywhere at the same time, totally abstracted and rapidly flitting about in myriad versions of hopelessly leading questions without reference to source and defining circumstance. Writ large, we hear self's authentic, yet fleeting, secrets in gaudily romanticized form of talk shows, as the troubled, tormented, and morally triumphant are incited in interviews to speak of their inner sorrows, deepest fears, and hidden desires. What had once been viewed as profoundly personal becomes unending grist for public display in what has become an interview society" (Gubrium and Holstein 2003, p. 7).

In the society, 'obsessed' with reality shows, celebrities stories and talk shows, Facebook is a perfect mirror of our time. After all, with its emphasis on pictures and public display of comments, is it not another reality show, made on Internet this time? Does it not respond to the need of young people, especially, to constantly seek public validation for what they are doing at any given moment of time? And is it not a product of 'interview society', where it became fashionable to reveal, sometimes, very intimate, details, of one person's life? David Silverman went as far as to say that 'perhaps we all live in what might be called an 'interview society', in which interviews seem central to making sense of our lives" (Silverman 1987, p.248).

Under these changes it would “be a mistake to treat the interview – or any information-gathering technique – as simply a research procedure. The interview is part and parcel of our society and culture. It is not just a way of obtaining information about who and what we are; it is now an integral, constitutive feature of our everyday lives” (Gubrium and Holstein 2003, p.29).

In light of these reflexions, especially on postmodern condition, on the way the information technologies might affect our lives and in a way we are more and more accustomed to live in an ‘interview society’, I find it interesting that for my own study, one of the methods of research I selected is a face-to-face interview about this very ‘interview society’. Facebook reflects (or affects?) the changes in the way we organize our life and some of its features do mirror the characteristics of ‘an interview society’, like posting picture, updating status and exchanging messages on the wall. In this respect, Facebook is one of the facets of theatrical performance. As Norman Denzin reflected: “The electronic media and the new information technologies turn everyday life into a theatrical spectacle where the dramas that surround the decisive performances of existential crises are enacted” (Denzin 2003, p. 143).

Interview with Charlotte is the first among many and I am already looking forward to conduct other interviews.

### **The Interview**

We meet with Charlotte near cafeteria and after having bought some coffee start looking for a room. If not having the interview with another PhD student I would arrange something in advance but since we do it here, at the University, I reckoned that it would not be a problem. Most of the time I find myself entirely alone in the room where I have my desk and Charlotte mentioned that it was the same for her.

However, just on that day, I have people in my room and Charlotte says that it is the same at her working space. Silently, I reprimand myself for not having taken the advice of my supervisor and teacher at MA course as it was given: whatever are the circumstances, think of an interview venue in advance.

Fortunately, we find an empty room five minutes later and sit opposite each other at a round table. It is comfortable and quiet, that until some students and a

teacher come to the room two minutes later. Seeing our worried expressions the teacher assures that they will be very quiet, which, of course, they are not and for the rest of our meeting I worry whether I will have any background noise on my recorder. Only later, at home, I will discover that there is no noise and I can clearly distinguish everything we have exchanged during the interview with Charlotte, since the room was very big, but it is the first mistake I make at my first interview and I know that next time I will definitely pay more attention to logistics.

For five minutes we just chat and I explain to Charlotte what we are going to do and ask her to study the consent form and sign it if she agrees. Already before agreeing to meet me Charlotte mentioned that I could use her real name and even her Facebook profile for demonstration, but I still prefer to change her name and keep as much information private as possible. Facebook does not have any policy prohibiting scholars from studying profiles of users who have not activated some privacy settings. Still, not only for this interview, but also for future research I am planning to abide by strict ethical issues. Internet environment by offering numerous opportunities for researchers also presents danger to a certain extent in abusing trust and privacy of its users. Therefore, even more important than in offline context is to respect ethical issues and privacy. Apart from the well-established ethical conventions I am also planning to follow the recommendations on the ethics of Internet research. There is a statement produced by Association of Internet Researchers (Ess and the Association of Internet Researchers Ethics Committee 2002), which establishes some questions which researchers should consider before launching research on Internet (Hine 2005, Aoir ethics document 2002). I am doing it not only because I do research at University and have to think of its reputation as well as of mine, most importantly is to think about the participants themselves. First of all, they might change their minds about participating in the research, or they might not like their profiles in ten years time. Just the other day a friend of mine published a picture of me on Facebook and tagged me in it. It would probably be all right if I found myself looking gorgeous on that picture. But unfortunately, I didn't. The friend removed the picture eventually after I had asked her to do so, but it caused me a lot of frustrations and unease.

Finally, I switch on my recorder and after having again summarized my research aims I start asking some questions. I feel nervous, because it is my first interview in a research environment, and I am afraid that I might forget or run out of my questions. I have a list with some semi-opened questions, but I hope that the conversation will be such that I won't need it and that it will be more as a chat. I hope to have a 'reflexive interview', in which "two speakers enter into a dialogue relationship with one another. In this relationship, a tiny drama is played out. Each person becomes a party to the utterances of the other. Together, the two speakers create a small dialogic world of unique meaning and experience" (Denzin 2003, p. 147).

Because after all, my own research project is aimed to be reflexive. By using Facebook as a background I want to study a broader social context, by looking not only at the identity but also at its manifestation in postmodern condition and on the way we view community and sociability in our times. And the interview format itself has changed to adjust to the broader changes in the society and the way the research is done. "The present era of interviewing has taken on board postmodern sensibilities. In this context, the interview conversation is viewed as having diverse purposes, with a communicative format constructed as much within the interview as it stems from predesigned research interests. Interview roles are less clear than they once were; in some cases they are even exchanged to promote new opportunities for understanding the shape and evolution of selves and experience" (Gubrium and Holstein 2003, p. 3).

Indeed, already from the beginning we have more of a conversation rather than a strict interview format with Charlotte. I find it interesting that on my question, why did she join Facebook, she said that she found it as one of the easiest to use.

"...I think I registered first for MySpace. Initially...But it was too heavy...too difficult. Not difficult, but time consuming. For profile thing. And it's relatively easy to set a profile on Facebook, so...and I think a couple of my friends were on Facebook at that time. And that's why I went for Facebook as opposed to some other sites out there," says Charlotte.

"But you just wanted to be on one site?" I ask in return, as I find it rather intriguing that Charlotte talks about the need to join a social site (any, but the

most convenient) as one might chose a local supermarket to go do some groceries. Indeed, later Charlotte mentions that some young people do not even remember the time when such sites as Facebook did not exist. For me, joining a Facebook was rather a different thing. It looked scary (as any new technology to me) and I joined it more because of a peer pressure. As one friend recently mentioned: "if you are not on Facebook nowadays, you are sooo uncool!" But Charlotte, I have to mention, is from a younger generation, a generation where, as another student told me once, "it's all about socialization and people you know, by using online network."

The age issue and generation dilemma comes again in the interview shortly, when Charlotte says that her mother is also on Facebook.

"She is not, you see, of a particular age group, you expect to see on it (Facebook)," she specifies.

Frankly, I do not know. My farther is not on Facebook, but my stepdad is, and he seems to know more about information technologies than I do. I am not sure whether the use of new technologies is related to age, or other factors, and it is one of the issues I might explore later while doing my research.

But what I find contrasting is perhaps how Charlotte deals with Facebook itself. By the way she talks about it, I would say that she is more 'mature' in its usage than I am and has the 'stereotypes' of generation, which is older than mine, by saying later that she does not think that using Facebook as a dating site is a healthy use of it. That, after she admits that some of her friends did actually meet successfully through Facebook and live together now. This again brings me to reflect about age and generations. Is it really related to the age or rather background and personal experience? I am not good in using new information technologies (I prefer an old model of Nokia to any new sophisticated phones), but I did try Facebook in dating. Not that successfully, I must add. Which I do not admit to Charlotte, afraid of her judgment.

Realizing that I am ashamed to say to Charlotte that I do not see anything unhealthy or embarrassing in using online social networks for dating, it strikes me that I am busy with impression management, even in my role of a researcher and interviewer. And I start wondering whether Charlotte is doing the same on her part. There are a few things, which consolidate me in this opinion,

as after having said that she is rather careful with what she puts on Facebook, later she admits that she is “kind of person who would say something and not really think about it.” On the other hand, we are all busy with impression management in almost all social encounters, according to Goffman. I like his theory in terms that we do indeed want our reader to form a particular opinion about our personae, but I disagree with him about that ‘life, in truth, is a wedding.’ I think more in line with Anthony Cohen that behind any mask is hiding an inner self. But on Facebook it is difficult to see the inner self, isn't?

With Charlotte is the same. I try to see behind her mask, which is not difficult as I know her already for several months. She is very thoughtful, intelligent, but also very funny and judging from her Facebook pictures, she also likes partying, and is a ‘normal’ girl in her early twenties.

However, in public (at least in University environment) and on Facebook, the most important mask Charlotte is wearing is that of a teacher. In parallel to her PhD Charlotte already teaches for the second year. I know that she adores teaching and that it is not just a mask, or a performance, but perhaps, one of the dearest features of her identity. From my own experience, I know that when you really love your job, it starts forming perhaps the most important part of your identity. It happened to me when I enjoyed my work as a financial analyst of banks. Later, when I stopped liking it as I used to and started to write, I would say that I was a writer and earned my living as a financial analyst of banks, which is different from when you say that you are a financial analyst of banks. And when I created my Facebook profile, it was important for me to put in there my ‘ideal self’ (that of a writer), as opposed to what I was really doing in life. (An ideal self, according to Tory Higgins, is representation of the attributes one would like, ideally, to possess, Higgins 1987).

Some researchers, having studied, online social networks, argue that in online setting, we tend to present our ideal selves (Ellison et al 2006). Some, such as Boyd and Liu et al. suggest that in online settings, people, occupying certain professions, tend to be more careful than others. “...some users are cowed to the fear of potentially embarrassing exposure – for example, teacher exposing to his students, or teenager exposing to his mother. As a result, users may be cowed into a lowest-common-denominator behaviour, sanitizing the personal

profile of all potentially embarrassing, incriminating, or offensive content.” (Liu et al., retrieved online on October 2008).

And indeed, Charlotte confirms this view:

“I tend to be careful with who I add as a friend and what I post. Because I teach and was teaching last year. Almost full time. I tend to be more careful about what do I post and with whom I communicate. A few students added me as a friend. And I tried to limit what they can see from my profile. And profile itself I don't fill out. You won't see what I like, which TV shows I watch.”

But while I listen to Charlotte, I wonder whether her choice of leaving her profile blank is related to the fact that she is teaching, and whether in other circumstances we try to project our ideal selves. I have other friends who teach on Facebook as friends, and they do not leave their profiles blank. One says that his favourite music is Sibelius and that he likes helping students to do well (which I found rather funny, and which is so true regarding that this person indeed helps students) and another, apart from mentioning that she is a teacher also put some interesting pictures. At least I found them interesting as I was wondering who many children this teacher had and how did they look like.

As to promoting the ideal self, I now wonder whether we do not project the ideal self when we are not entirely satisfied with our actual self? At this moment I am putting more accent on the fact that I do a PhD rather than on my writing, because I enjoy doing research. A friend of mine, on the other hand, who would like to be musician full-time, while his daily job is that of a librarian, has made his profile on Facebook around his music preferences and does not mention what he does for a living. It is too early to draw conclusions at this moment as I need more data, but this is something I am planning to look at deeper while doing my research.

While we continue talking with Charlotte, the theme of time, community and the way we live our lives nowadays comes up. The fact that currently we can shop around the clock, have round the clock entertainment and have less time to meet friends falls under the condition of postmodernism. The theme of cinematic society also emerges at a certain point when Charlotte mentions that she prefers to look at pictures rather than at words while looking at profiles of her friends.

As to Facebook itself, Charlotte names it “a lazy form of social interaction”.

“You sit at home, at your computer, doing something else. It’s an easy way to distract yourself from the work you are trying to do. By, for example, sending your next-to-door neighbour, who is only ten feet away, a message, trying to see what he is doing later. Or you can send somebody a message instead of phone and speaking to them. Because you know that on the phone you can spend quite a lot of time. So, I think, it’s a lazy way. It’s a café in a certain way, but it’s a lazy form of keeping in touch with people.”

This observation falls into a broader debate of how we manage our time nowadays and the way we organize our lives, like shopping or going out.

“...I think that a lot of people have trouble with time nowadays. There is not enough time to do anything...So, something which is quick and easy and also allows you to keep in touch with everybody at the same time is preferred to...you know, getting home, be prepared, getting out, spending company with people and then getting home, going to be late and being tired the next day. You know, it’s a lot easier...”

Or, as Charlotte adds later:

“I think...that people generally have or think they have less time. We tend to demand things quickly. At any hour of the day. And I think it’s more true now than it perhaps was towards thirty, forty years ago, where emphasis was more towards face-to-face, family life and work-life balance. Things happen to be otherwise these days, when people tend to be involved with work all day. So, maybe we just want an easier and faster way to do things. It’s about convenience, and you can see of it in the society quite a lot.”

Sherry Turkle in her study of virtual environment said a similar thing:

“We seem to be in the process of retreating further into our homes, shopping for merchandise in catalogues or on television channels, shopping for companionship via personal ads” (Turkle 1996, p. 235).

Our way of living, at least in Western hemisphere, is mostly about convenience, and in this respect, Facebook, in words of Charlotte seems indeed to be just ‘an additional tool’, which helps us to make things easier, this time, for communicating with friends or staying in touch with long-distance relationships.

"...It's all about convenience," says Charlotte, "You can go to the supermarket and do your shopping mid-night. You can get...to a certain degree, anything you need at any hour of the day. So, it follows that people will want a facility to communicate with each other conveniently whenever they feel like it."

However, if for some these changes bring a feeling of pessimism, who like Gergen see in these trends "an enormous barrage of social stimulation" and even "a dangerous distancing" (Gergen 2000, p.5-9), for others, like Foucault it is more about the choice. We live in an area where we have more choice (Bauman 1997, Blain 2002), and the fact to be overwhelmed by social stimulation is also about choice. For instance, I do not have television at home. It is a choice I made several years ago because I do not like TV. And I prefer to go and meet a friend for a coffee rather than spend hours on chatting on Facebook. Nothing has yet come to replace face-to-face meeting, and even if we do live in different times, where things are indeed more convenient, friends still go out together, and the amount with which new cafes and restaurants are being opened in each city of the UK every year probably shows that it is what people still do: they gather together.

As Charlotte says about Facebook:

"It's to a certain extent can't replace meeting for a coffee...and discussing things, you know, face-to-face," and then more radically: "Because I would think and I would hope that most people would need face-to-face interaction with people...with friends to maintain the friendship."

Charlotte also mentions that it is difficult to form an opinion about someone online. Here the theme of dramaturgy of Goffman comes into view. As says Charlotte:

"...I think that potentially there are a lot of different facets to a person. You know a person that you present when you are at work, the person that you present when you are out with your friends, and the person you present to your family can often be different things." And Charlotte chooses to present an 'edited version' of herself on Facebook, which in her case is to leave her profile blank, since it might be "a tricky business."

My profile is not blank but it is for sure a projection of one aspect of my personae, which used to be what I wanted to be 'the ideal me.' On the other

hand, if Charlotte finds it difficult to meet someone online and form a friendship via Facebook, I have different experience with the site. I did make some friends and even if as says Charlotte “you can tell a lot from things like, your speech, body language, appearance”, the things which Goffman calls “front” (Goffman 1959, p. 34) and which are missing in online environment, I was still able to form more or less correct opinion about some people I met online and which I later also met in real life. On the other hand, it is again about choice. I chose to include in my network people I do not know in real life and filled in my profile. Charlotte uses it mainly as messaging system.

## **Conclusion**

The interview went shorter than I wished, mainly because all the questions I prepared in advance I could not ask. There were mainly related to the profile section and since Charlotte left it blank, I could not ask her about which quote did she put in there and why. On the other hand, many other interesting themes have emerged, especially regarding time, convenience, Goffman’s dramaturgy and face-to-face meeting. This led to a broader reflection on postmodern condition in my analysis of the interview and that is why I also included many personal reflections and my own experience with Facebook.

## **Interview with Charlotte (transcript)**

Me: thank you for agreeing to do interview with me. It is important for my study in which I look at Facebook as a social context and cultural phenomenon and look at the construction and expression of identity. Recently there has been an increase in popularity of online social networks and Facebook is interesting because it asks to include people one usually knows in real life and build a ‘genuine’ profile. Facebook is interesting to look at as one of social encounters. There is a sociologist Ervin Goffman who looked at human interaction as some kind of performance. I am looking at Facebook as one of social encounters. But I still try to determine what for a social encounter is it. Is it a new cultural phenomenon, a new hang-out place, an online café? I don’t know. So, I am going to ask you a few questions. You are on Facebook. Can you tell me how did you come across this site?

Ch: Mhh, I don't really remember...I think I registered first for MySpace. Initially...But it was too heavy...too difficult. Not difficult, but time consuming. For profile thing. And it's relatively easy to set a profile on Facebook, so...and I think a couple of my friends were on Facebook at that time. And that's why I went for Facebook as opposed to some other sites out there.

Me: But you just wanted to be on one site? You reckon you meant that you just wanted to be on one social site? And what does it give it to you to be on Facebook?

Ch: Right. Well...I am originally from Manchester. And my brother lives in Australia. And...I've got friends all over the country. And in other countries as well. So, it's nice to be able to keep in touch with them. Without necessary having to phone them or go and see them. And to keep track of what everybody is doing and where everybody is. Mhh...in quite a passive way I suppose. You can go and see all your friends, how all you friends are, and what they are doing. Without actively to seek each one out. And know how they are.

Me: I know what you mean. You sometimes log in to Facebook and look at it as a movie.

Ch: Yeah. Exactly, just look what everyone is doing.

Me: And what has been your experience so far with Facebook?

Ch: I think it's quite good. I found it particularly useful...As I said my brother lives in Australia. And I know my mom has recently joined Facebook. Since he went to Australia. She is not, you see, of a particular age group you expect to see on it. And it's nice, because you can leave him messages. Especially that he is in a completely different time zone. You can leave him messages and he can get to them when he has time over there. And you can actually see pictures. You can actually see how he is. And see what he is doing. I think, it is really nice.

Me: And do you use the wall to post messages?

Ch: Yeah. Well, yeah. It depends what it is about. If it's a general message, it can go to the wall. If it's something I want to tell him about, I do it through private messages.

Me: And this feature of the wall. Can anyone from your colleagues or your parents see what you post there?

Ch: Yes

Me: How do you manage this? Do you think about what you post or you don't think about it?

Ch: I tend to be quite careful with who I add as a friend and what I post. Because I teach and was teaching last year. Almost full time. I tend to be more careful about what do I post and with whom I communicate. A few students added me as a friend. And I tried to limit what they can see from my profile. And profile itself I don't fill out. You won't see what I like, which TV shows I watch.

Me: So, your profile is empty?

Ch: It's completely blank. It has my day of birth. And that's about it. Because, people who know me, they will know all these things already. I am not particularly interested in using it as a networking tool to meet new people, but to keep in touch with people I already know.

Me: Mhh. Well, I did want to ask you what did you put in your profile. But...

Ch: Well, yes, I don't particularly find it useful to fill in the profile. Because as I said I add only people I know in real life, and certainly people I've met in person. If not, - friends.

Me: And when you look at profiles of other people, what do you usually look at? I mean, are you interested in what they put in it about themselves?

Ch: Sometimes. It can be quite funny. When someone looks in their profile, what you think, doesn't look well on them. Makes them look foolish. But, if you look at profiles of people you added, for instance colleagues. It can be from this institution or another. It can be quite interesting, because you can gather from their profile more information about their interests. Their research interests, teaching interests, things like that. So it depends. People you know only

socially, sometimes, put in their profiles rather strange things. People you know for professional reasons, I mean, people with whom you interact professionally, these people will tend to be more serious.

Me: Have you checked my profile?

Ch: I've seen it (laugh). But I don't remember. I usually just check the picture, to check whether this is actually the person I know. You know, that's about it. I find interest in pictures, to be honest, rather than in words.

Me: You mentioned that your brother is in Australia and some of your friends are in Manchester. How would you compare Facebook to real face-to-face encounter? In relation how to you communicate with these people via Facebook?

Ch: It's...well, with my brother in Australia it's slightly different because if you phone him or he phones you, it's expensive. There is often a background noise and a time-delay, so it can be quite awkward to be talking with him on the phone. While Facebook has an advantage over the phone, like text or message, and there is a live-chat, where you can exchange a few words. But otherwise, it works in the same way as email, as it is easier to pick up a number of messages at a certain time.

Me: But do you think that Facebook is replacing in some ways meeting people in real life? Or you wouldn't say so?

Ch: I think it depends what you use it for. I know some people use it to meet potential partners. There is some mechanism there. I know that some people met like that and ended up in a relationship. Due to Facebook. I don't think it's a healthy use of it, and it's along the lines of Internet dating, I expect.

Me: Why don't you think it's a healthy usage of Facebook?

Ch: I don't know really. I wouldn't say I am not in favour of Internet dating, in comparison to other forms of romantic relationships. But, I just think that it's a lot safer if you meet someone face-to-face. You can tell a lot from things like, your speech, body language, appearance. And you actually know that the person you are talking to is actually the person you think you are talking to.

Me: And you don't think that on Internet...

Ch: I think that perhaps Facebook is actually better than other internet dating sites. Because people will have a profile that with friends, with people who actually know this person, so it's less likely that people will pretend to be someone else. But I do think that it's the projection of the persona, somebody that actually might not be who they are in person. And I think that for this reason it might be difficult to meet people on there, and then try to form some kind of bond.

Me: And do you know anyone who tried to do it?

Ch: Yes, I do. One of my friends met his girlfriend on Facebook. I am not entirely sure how he did it, but he met her through a friend on Facebook, and then they've lived together.

Me: They are living together?

Ch: Yeah

Me: So, it does work?

Ch: Yeah. It certainly does work. I know he had been on Internet dating sites before. I am sure if it works for you then it works for you, but I don't think it would work for me.

Me: And do you know other stories related to Facebook? Like some funny story?

Ch: (Pause)...Stupid thing...No, not really...I think it's just amazing how people you know, know each other and you just don't realize. If you got quite a wide social group, I found a friend of mine who used to live with my boyfriend years ago. We haven't been in touch for a long time. She added me as a friend on Facebook. And when I accepted her as a friend I saw that she was a friend of someone who you wouldn't think that they would know each other. And it has been a few instances like that where, you know...I met somebody at the bar

who was going to work for a law firm, and I knew somebody there, so I added her on Facebook too. To talk with her about her job. And it turned out that she knew my next to door neighbour. (Laugh). So, it's random association. You find out that social circle extends further than you think it does.

Me: Coming back to meeting your next-door neighbour. Do you see any tendency in community formation nowadays with all these social networks? Would you call Facebook a new neighbouring place, or an online local café?

Ch: I think it's a lazy form of social interaction. You sit at home, at your computer, doing something else. It's an easy way to distract yourself from the work you are trying to do. By, for example, sending your next-to-door neighbour, who is only ten feet away, a message, trying to see what he is doing later. Or you can send somebody a message instead of phone and speaking to them. Because you know that on the phone you can spend quite a lot of time. So, I think, it's a lazy way. It's a café in a certain way, but it's a lazy form of keeping in touch with people.

Me: Yeah. Facebook also helps to maintain long-distance relationships. But it seems that some young people are constantly on Facebook.

J: Yeah

Me: It's just my personal opinion.

Ch: Yeah, you're right. It's... If you maintain a long-distance relationship or if you maintain the relationship with people you wouldn't normally see day-to-day...then...I still think it's a lazy way of keeping in touch, but with international calls which are not cheap, it's quite a cheap and effective way of keeping in touch. I think if you are, you know, on Facebook and sending a message to a friend who lives around the corner...or if you...I try to think of another example (laugh), but then I think it becomes...(a pause)...it becomes almost instead of face-to-face interaction.

Me: Mhh. So, it's like replacing in some ways...

Ch: Yeah. I think it's a very useful additional tool. If it's some kind of distance relationship you are trying to maintain. I think if it's a way of maintaining a relationship with people you see on a daily basis or a regular basis. It's to a

certain extent can't replace meeting for a coffee. ..and discussing things, you know, face-to-face.

Me: Yeah. Now, if we consider if it can replace face-to-face. If for instance, you are on Facebook, and put something on the wall, do you expect a reply? Like, do you try to visualize how the other person reacts? What he thinks? Even if it's only text, obviously.

Ch: Yeah, it's quite easy to be misunderstood...(long pause). I don't know really...mhh...I wouldn't say I visualize how they would react. I suppose I don't really think about it. But then I suppose I am the kind of person who would say something and not really think about it.

Me: But do you think in terms of an audience when you put something on the wall? I mean, the wall is a particular feature of Facebook...like, do you seek some reaction when you post something?

Ch: I think it's easy to forget that a lot of people can see when you post something on somebody's wall. It's just easy to assume that it's private because it's a conversation between two of you. And it's not always the case. So some people do post the things that can be seen as contra-defensive or inappropriate. Because their feeling is that they are in a private conversation with one of their friends and then they almost forget that anyone can see it. I am quite careful what I post on people's walls and as I said I tend to use private message facility if it's anything that I don't want people to see. And it's quite irritating when other people put something offensive or inappropriate on your wall. Because it's as if it becomes a reflexion of you rather than reflexion of them.

Me: Okay. I see what you mean. Sometimes I compare it to a private show. I have a friend who puts updates about his movements during the day every five minutes.

Ch: (laugh). It's taking things a little bit too far I think. I tend to put status report. I mean, I put update if I sit at my computer and have nothing better to do. Or...if a particular problem...something is happening maybe? I think updating, even on a daily basis is just that...you have nothing better to do with your time. I mean, maintaining a Facebook profile (laugh). And I have other things to do.

Me: Do you think that Facebook helps to maintain a genuine relationship? Is it a tool which helps maybe to deepen relationships? Or not?

Ch: That's an interesting question. I don't think that it contributes on its own to deepen relationships. I think what it does is facilitating communication between you. And I think that if you ever speak to someone only on Facebook and it's the only way of communication you would think of, I don't personally feel that it would contribute to form a deep relationship. Unless, it's circumstances that caused the lack of other communication. But I think that if you don't want to phone somebody or meet them face-to-face, that suggests that you don't want a deep relationship with them. But I do think that it does help to facilitate communication. For example, I know that if I call my best friend, I will be on the phone for two hours. And quite a lot of time I don't have a bloc of two hours. Speak to her...it's not like I don't want to, it's just that I don't have time and I hate phoning her and say that I've only got five minutes. So, in this respect, Facebook is very useful. You send a quick message: "hi, how are you?" It takes only five minutes. You can do it when you are waiting for something or when you are having a quick break. When you wouldn't necessary have time to speak to somebody.

Me: So, Facebook helps to maintain in a certain way communication. When you don't want to chat face-to-face.

Ch: Yeah. I mean, it's easier to get in touch with people. And to keep in touch with people.

Me: For my research I also do look at profiles of other people. Sometimes, I am interested in what they are doing. But, coming back to this neighbouring place. Do you see any change in how people meet nowadays? Would you say that online social networks are replacing sometimes community?

Ch: Yeah, and I don't think that it's entirely due to Facebook. Things like Internet forums have been around for a long time. And they have enabled a group of like-minded individuals to come together. Not physically, but in cyberspace. To talk about issues. And I think that Facebook again facilitates that. I think it can replace physical interaction. But if you feel that you are keeping in touch with somebody in that way, you may be less inclined to go and meet for a coffee or to go and do something with them. You may feel that you've got enough contact, you got in touch with them. With that person online. And I think that a lot of people have trouble with time nowadays. There is not enough time to do anything. And particularly in the field that we've chosen...leisure time is often a

guilty pleasure rather than something you are entitled to. So, something which is quick and easy and also allows you to keep in touch with everybody at the same time is preferred to...you know, getting home, be prepared, getting out, spending company with people and then getting home, going to be late and being tired the next day. You know, it's a lot easier. But I think that most people wouldn't replace face-to-face interaction with Facebook to a great degree. Because I would think and I would hope that most people would need face-to-face interaction with people...with the friends to maintain the friendship.

Me: Yeah. I tend to agree. But I know that some people, for psychological reasons, are afraid to meet face-to-face. Research has shown that social online networks have helped this kind of people. It allows them to get into some community. But coming back to this notion of time. Do you see some change in how we manage our time? And if so, why?

Ch: I think...(pause) that people generally have or think they have less time. We tend to demand things quickly. At any hour of the day. And I think it's more true now than it perhaps was towards thirty, forty years ago, where emphasis was more towards face-to-face, family life and work-life balance. Things happen to be otherwise these days, when people tend to be involved with work all day. So, maybe we just want an easier and faster way to do things. It's about convenience, and you can see of it in the society quite a lot.

Me: So you do see some change in the way how we organize time?

Ch: Yeah. It's all about convenience. You can go to the supermarket and do your shopping mid-night. You can get...to a certain degree, anything you need at any hour of the day. So, it follows that people will want a facility to communicate with each other conveniently whenever they feel like it.

Me: And do you think that things like Facebook will stay there for a time?

Ch: Yeah. I think that's not going anywhere now. And I think that particularly a lot of people now...people who are perhaps younger than myself don't remember time when it didn't exist. And they would wonder how they would do without it. But, I think there are...some problems with it. I mean, it would never replace face-to-face interaction, or phoning somebody. I mean if you don't check regularly your email, or your messages you don't know if somebody emailed you or phoned you or that they want to see you. I think...I mean. I don't

think that it's going anywhere but I think...that people certainly wouldn't replace other forms of communication.

Me: I met this girlfriend on Facebook and asked her whether she would call Facebook an online café, and she told me that young people don't meet nowadays in cafes. But in hang-out places. I mean, I am trying to see whether there is any change in how people approach each other. In general. I mean, not only via Facebook. Facebook, as you said, contributes to...it's a communication tool which sometimes replaces face-to-face. But in general do you see any change how people approach each other or how we interact with each other?

Ch: (pause). It's difficult to say...really. Mhh...I mean, the tendency you can see clearly in young people is to get together and drink quite a lot and not really speak to each other that much. That's been certainly my experience of being a teenager. But, I still feel that there is a tendency to get together. I think there will always be a tendency to get together physically, to meet face-to-face. And...you know, there has been a shift in society. There has been a shift away from togetherness and community. But. I don't know if Facebook is means to replace that. To step into this void. I don't think that online environment can ever be as useful or as suitable as, you know, more traditional face-to-face leaflets.

Me: But could you call Facebook as one form of social encounter? I mean, there are different forms. When you are at work, or in a café.

Ch: Yeah. Yeah. Definitely.

Me: Goffman told that each time we communicate we try to form an impression on someone. How do you think we form an impression on Facebook?

Ch: I think it's quite difficult on Facebook to form a true view of what people are alike. Because you present yourself in a certain way. And I think, that's why you have to be careful. In terms of including material in your profile. If you got a very mixed audience for your profile, like friends, colleagues, students, parents. You have to be careful how you portray yourself I think. And I think that potentially there are a lot of different facets to a person. You know a person that you present when you are at work, the person that you present when you are out with your friends, and the person you present to your family can often be different things. And combining them all in a profile is a tricky business. That's why I haven't done it (laugh).

Me: Yeah, I am actually looking at how people combine these things. I mean, there is often this meeting of work and pub.

Ch: It's incredibly interesting. Because you can speak to people. You can speak to people not only about it but you can see it in people, you know. For example, if they go on at work Christmas party they take a partner. They can often be, you know, there can be differences between the way the person portrays himself or is at home with a partner and the way they portray themselves at work. So, a friend of mine was giving an example of office flirtation, which may go on all the time in the office. It comes to the Christmas party and the person takes a partner along. And they are a completely different person to how they are usually at work. And I think that's those distinctions that aren't made on Facebook profile. And I mean, your conduct as well. You can't innocently flirt with somebody from work, if your profile can be seen by your partner.

Me: So, it's like some kind of form of compromise of how you present yourself.

Ch: It's an edited version of all the different selves you portray to different people in different circumstances.

## **Interview with Joanna**

### **Introduction**

Today is January 2010 and I have an interview with Joanna. I decided to change the venue this time for an interview and we agreed to meet at Starbucks café. I like their latte and Joanna said on the phone that she wanted a 'place with coffee' for the interview.

I am looking forward to the interview as Joanna, who is also among my Facebook friends is a very interesting person. I know her from life-drawing class where I used to model occasionally and there I also sometimes volunteered as the organiser of the class. Joanna is a very gifted artist, making of portraits abstract paintings and I also like her personality. She is gregarious, outgoing and judging from her Facebook statuses updates, is enjoying quite a fascinating life. She worked as a nurse in the past, models for life-drawing classes and has her own studio as an artist. She once made me a bag from coins, which is an interesting piece of art.

I expect a lot from this interview as Joanna is quite active on Facebook and from some of our conversations about the subject, she has a lot to say on the matter. While I still drag the list with questions for the interview along with me (the questions change after each interview), it turns out at each interview that I don't need to use it. People love talking about Facebook and the conversation is usually flowing in such a way that I don't need my prepared questions. I want my interviews to be reflexive and reflect a story rather than a formal setting. I know now that my thesis will be a mixture of personal narratives and theory, I still don't know how to organise it exactly but the focus has changed. I am still trying to see the connection between online and offline worlds but I am more interested now in Facebook as a cultural phenomenon. It is obvious from the interviews I got so far that people love Facebook, but Facebook is different for each person and Facebook is, of course, also a corporation, - how am I going to combine all these different things? I am still reflecting on the theoretical part of the thesis.

### **Interview**

We meet with Joanna at Starbucks, buy coffee and find a table to sit. I am immediately concerned about the music, - will it be too loud? But we eventually find a nice quiet corner away from the speakers and start our interview.

I explain to Joanna again the purpose of my research, even though she is quite familiar with it by now and read the consent form (and asked to keep her first name), and when ask the question I always ask. When did she join Facebook and why? From my previous interviews I already drew a conclusion that there is a social pressure to join Facebook: all friends end up there, events are advertised there and one person mentioned even the fact that Facebook is a necessity, a necessity to build a professional career.

And I am not surprised to hear from Joanna that she, like many others, felt a pressure to join.

"I joined it about, I think it must've been about two years ago now... And I did it because everybody else was joining, so I didn't really like the idea of missing out."

This idea of 'not missing out' if not on Facebook is very common. Is Facebook a new socialisation place, a new gathering space? Is it replacing community and meeting with friends, or it will never replace face-to-face contact? I will need to look more in details at this question in my thesis.

Almost immediately another already familiar theme emerges, - the fact that people are so busy today that Facebook becomes a convenient tool in the society where demands and everyday pressures don't allow to have a lot of free time.

As Joanna says:

"Mostly, it's just keeping in touch with my friends, because at the time when I started on Facebook I was working nights a lot, so I didn't always see my friends when I wanted to. So to start off with it was to see my friends, like to keep in touch with them, because it was an easy way to keep in touch with them... instead of oh, I must phone this person then I must phone that person... because for one, you've got to have credit on your phone, then you've got to catch them in, then you've got to have time to sit down and have a chat to them and they might not have time and I might not have time, then it's actually... for me, even though there can be several hours between contact with people, it's kind of waving at people and the wave stays there until they come and collect it. It's much better than a phone call or text messaging for me, because you're not interrupting people's lives to contact them. What you're doing is you've got a space in your life where you can contact people, and when they've got a space in their life they can contact you back..."

And as Joanna continues at my question as to whether Facebook is replacing other forms of contact.

"My thoughts about face-to-face contact is that it's a shame, that Facebook is replacing face-to-face contact and I wish I had more time and my friends had more time, to actually have face-to-face contact with them... and I think that the reason that people don't keep in contact other than Facebook, is because everyone is really busy, you know most people, although were in the middle of a recession, most of the people I know are working full time, or working full time because they've got children, they have to carry around here, there and centre, they've got partners, they've got family members who aren't well and they're

taken up with caring for those... so there's a whole host of reasons why they're busy, and I'm busy because you know, I'm working two or three jobs at a time, I'm at college, I'm busy and when I'm doing college work I'm kind of intent on it, and I can lose three days just by concentrating on projects, and I find it really hard break away from what I'm doing to go off and meet somebody, whereas if I'm in the middle of something and I need a ten minute break from it, I can use that to catch up with what everybody's doing, have a quick chat to somebody then go back to my work without feeling like I've distracted my day... because going out and meeting somebody takes at least a couple of hours, you know, you've got to decide where you're going to meet up, go there, have a chat and I feel more connected to my friends through Facebook than I do when I'm trying to organise going to see them."

The observations of Joanna on the fact that Facebook is convenient because everyone is busy continues the theme I am already developing, such as the fact that we live in society where there is a general acceleration of life (Agger 2010). Thus, Ben Agger argues that because of pressure and demands our society is experiencing, we tend to 'accelerate' things, whose result is a fast capitalism, where people instead of going out, reading and talking with friends, prefer to spend their time in front of the computers. However, he also says that the benefits of spending so much time in front of the screen are doubtful. What kind of value one can derive from reading celebrities stories and reading statuses updates? However, I also find Agger little bit too pessimistic. He comes from the tradition of Frankfurt School and thinks that people are becoming passive towards their lives. But is it indeed the case? Statuses updates on Facebook can be quite trivial, but they also can be quite important and Facebook communication can help people with psychological problems.

Joanna, for instance, even compares Facebook friends to an intimate family and describes to me how Facebook chatting can lift her mood when she feels depressed.

"Because you know, sometimes you spend all day working on a project and then you think, 'oh, my brain is going to explode, it's going to dribble out of my ears', 'I really need a break from this, I'm bored', 'I need a cup of tea' is there anybody out there, and you look at your chat list to see who's online, then you

can have a conversation with somebody and it can be completely irrelevant in the same way that any casual conversation can be irrelevant. Or it can be very important. I've got a friend at the moment who's in hospital and is extremely ill and is not going to get better, and that is really harsh for me to deal with because by the end of this year I will have no more friend – you know, she'll be gone. And you know, I'm still friends with her kids and husband, but the friendship is different from what I've got with her. And I'm having a really hard time with it, but I've got friends on there so when it's two o'clock in the morning and I can't sleep because I'm worried about her there's always somebody I can chat to. There's always somebody I can tell, 'oh I'm having a really rubbish day, I went to see my friend and she was really down and I found it really hard to try and lift her spirits, because what do you say to somebody who's going to die?' And then other days I've had a really great day, she's been doing really well, really upbeat, I've produced something at work and it's like, 'yeah, I've had a great day, I want to share it with everybody' and I want to share everything that's been happening today. And I think for me, being able to share my day with people is like having them live with me without having to share a house with loads of people... it's that intimate at times. You know, where I may want to tell people I've done something I can. If I don't want to tell people that I've had the day from hell and I'm feeling miserable then I don't have to, I don't have to tell people that I'm having a bad day. Quite often if I am having a bad day, I will tell people – I'll either put it on Twitter, because I'm on Twitter as well, and I blog... you know, I do the whole package and if I'm having a really bad day and I'm struggling then I will post that I've only just got out of bed and it's two o'clock in the afternoon... And I feeling like I'm in a deep, dark hole and I'm struggling, and I'll get loads of people who will remind me that I've been through this before and I will go through it again, and it's just part of the cycle of my illness, and that I just need to remember that, that I'm not stuck there forever that it is part of a cycle. And once I start remembering that it's part of the cycle I'll start doing the things that help me get better and help me move forward... and that's really good because for me it's a whole range of things... being able to have a really intimate relationship with my friends, down to talking about toilet habits and how often I have a bath or go cut my hair and things like that. Right the way through

to social and emotional support from my friends when I'm having a really hard time."

Joanna gets support from her friends on Facebook and says that it's a two-way street. She is there for her friends when they need her, and, in turn, her friends are there for her. And this, of course, leads me in my mind to the question of friendship, like what kind of friendship can we find on Facebook? Whom do we include as friends, how does it influence our behaviour on Facebook and can you form a genuine friendship on Facebook?

It is interesting that while all these questions go through my mind Joanna mentions the problem of the collapse of contexts on Facebook, - something at which I am looking by using Goffman (1959). Quite often we include close friends, acquaintances and colleagues among our friends on Facebook, - how does it influence the projection of ourselves on Facebook?

Joanna goes on with telling quite a fascinating story. When she used to work as a nurse she would sometimes draw portraits of her colleagues while on a break. She would put some of them on Facebook. Apparently her boss discovered it and asked to remove it. While Joanna is telling me all this, I am puzzled by different things. What is allowed to be put on Facebook, how private is Facebook and how amazing is the fact that anything can be discovered on Facebook even if the profile is set to private? This raises, of course, questions about privacy and about our behaviour on Facebook. Facebook becomes a projection of our public personas in a way, and it triggers an interesting question about celebrity culture. In a way, Facebook activity of its users is following the trend of celebrity culture, - it is popular to talk about the self and reveal private details about one's life. boyd talks in her thesis about 'attention economy', where everyone wants a small piece of fame. Is Facebook indeed answering to our desire of little fame? (boyd 2008)

Later Joanna mentions the fact that even if she would put some drawings on her profile, her activity on Facebook was different when she was working. She was censoring it more, and this is an interesting point to study, - do we behave differently on Facebook depending on where we are in terms of professional life? Another participant mentioned the fact that students start cleaning their profiles when they start looking for a job, and I also know from my own profile

that it was different when I used to work as a headhunter. This again leads me to the question of the collapse of different contexts and the public persona we project into the world by means of Facebook.

Joanna also mentions the bullying phenomenon on Facebook, something with which I am familiar myself and what another participant mentioned as well. As Joanna tells me:

" I don't post offensive things online but I mean if someone posts something offensive that I find offensive then I will tell them that it's offensive and ask them to remove it. Recently there was somebody asking me for my phone number from Mexico, and I thought it was a scam, because there are a lot of scams on Facebook and I joined a group and put comments on saying that I thought this was a scam... left it at that. I got a lot of flack for it from people and nasty messages telling me that I as a really heartless person. I didn't say anything negative about the guy who was asking for blood, all I said was that I thought it was a scam because there are so many of them on Facebook. Surely this is a fairly common blood group and he should be able to get a lot of blood from America. So I got backlash from it... but that's a part of it, where you'll ask a question and people will always take it the wrong way no matter where you are – whether you're in a café or whether you're in the library, the lecture hall or a bus stop. Sometimes you'll ask a question and somebody will hear it wrong and react to what they heard and shout at you. And I didn't apologise for asking if it was a scam, I apologised for causing any offence because that wasn't my intention – all I was interested in was protecting people that I knew had been scammed in the past. The person who set up the group I had a conversation with and she's quite rude to me to start off with, because you know my Facebook picture is not very flattering. Her initial message to me was who do you think you are? You've upset everybody, blah, blah, blah, and go on a diet you fat so and so. And I was like, for a start I thought it was a scam because it seemed to me a little bit dodgy that you were asking for blood donors in Mexico, when Mexico gets most of its blood products from America and he should be covered on his insurance for all of that so why are you asking for all of this? It just seemed dodgy to me, I didn't mean to cause any offence but I was just – you know, I've seen so many scams in the past – oh and don't call me fat, that's just rude and abusive and I will block you and report you for it. And she sent me

a message back saying a lot of people were upset and misunderstood what you were saying and I'm sorry for calling you names. But by that time I'd blocked her anyway, so I'd got her last message just after I'd blocked her – she'd obviously sent it as I was blocking her, and then I've not heard anything from anybody, apart from this little boy who for two or three days sent me a message telling me I'm fat and ugly and I should just go and kill myself for being so horrible. I think it's connected to that, because there's no other reason to get messages from a random person, so I reported and blocked them as well. But you know, I walk out of my house and get people insulting me so people insulting me on Facebook isn't going to bother me. There are tools on Facebook to stop people shouting at you, being rude to you, nasty and everything... it's called blocking the person, so the...I'm not so worried about being bullied on the internet, although I have seen other people being bullied on Facebook and thought it was appalling. But at the same time there are tools there to deal with it in a really sort of pro-active way, so... now I don't really edit myself much now, I used to but not now. Now I just say what I like, when I like."

This is worrisome but as Joanna mentions Facebook's bullying is not different from bullying in offline life, so maybe this phenomenon is simply more visible on the Internet?

We start talking with Joanna about different groups she joins on Facebook and I am interested in whether she can learn something from Facebook. Facebook is mostly used for entertainment (as previous research shows), but many recent political events started on Facebook and Obama's political campaign used Facebook and other social media very successfully.

As many others, Joanna says that Facebook can raise awareness about an issue and spread information about the topic about which you wouldn't have heard otherwise.

" I think a lot of awareness is based around a lot of issues. My son's got a different interest on Facebook than me, and he informs me of things that I know nothing about, and I inform him of things that he doesn't know about. It's useful to stay aware of what is happening in the world in a way that's much more accessible and its better than the following the news because the news is highly selective - you only get the reports that they want you to hear... and that's not in

a paranoid way but just in terms of what interests the editors is what you get to see – it's not all that's happening in the world, whereas on Facebook the groups and with various different people having various interests in different things, you can find out what's really going on in the world and what's happening and what's affecting people's lives in reality because the fact that an Irish politician tried to kill herself after having an affair with a younger man really doesn't affect me that much, but you know... the knowledge that a man came back from Afghanistan with two legs missing and the local council refused him permission to build a bungalow in his granddad's back garden, even though nobody objected on the grounds that it wasn't a necessary building you know.. That kind of thing affects me, the fact that they're sending young men off to war and that we're not taking care of them when they come back..."

Joanna mentions the fact that people are in a way braver on Facebook and this triggers on my part the question about surveillance. Do people mind that they can be watched and monitored on Facebook?

Though Joanna doesn't say it directly but her answer is in line with what some other participants told me on this account. People don't mind being monitored and think that Facebook and the government should have other preoccupations on their minds rather than watching the activities of people on Facebook. This is an interesting point, as it leads to the question as to what to do with surveillance? Should we remain passive and see our data being sold to third parties or should we react somehow?

This theme is closer to the one of democracy, - are people in general more passive and apathetic today? As Joanna says, it is indeed the case, and she explains it by the fact that we don't live in a true democracy and people don't bother that much about politics, as long as they don't die from hunger.

" Oh god, no. No, no, no. we are not a democratic country. If we were a democratic country we would have a referendum every week if we were truly democratic. You know, I would be able to walk into my MP's office at any time and I would be able to say, right, this is an issue that's very important to me and I want you to start doing something about it. If we were a democratic country, if I voted against somebody that I knew was going to get in, then my vote might actually count... Whereas it doesn't. If I chose not to vote, that would count as

well if we were a democratic country as well, but it doesn't. so the government is empowered on the basis of a third of the people voting, and the majority of a third of those people voting for the government, but that's not democracy, that's not a majority rule that's majority apathy. The reason people are apathetic is because the government's rubbish and they think there's no way to change it, and we're not living in poverty so why bother?"

Joanna then continues to tell me what people expect too much without doing anything in return and this leads to a passive outlook to life. This, of course, raises a question as to whether Facebook could play a role in building democracy. Is Facebook simply reflecting what is happening offline, or because of its properties and accessibility, it can achieve a greater democratic potential?

We finish the interview by discussing impression management on Facebook. I am interested in how Joanna built her profile and while she says she doesn't bother what much about what people think of her, she, nevertheless, tried to project a certain image of herself via her profile picture, which only reinforced me in my view that we all engage with impression management on Facebook.

## **Conclusion**

Joanna's interview was fascinating and came as a real individual story about Facebook usage. From the interview many themes emerged: friendship, acceleration of life in fast capitalism, Facebook bullying, surveillance aspect, democratic potential of Facebook, impression management, etc. Joanna's involvement with Facebook is personal and deep, - she compares her friends on Facebook with a family she doesn't have. This only illustrated for me the different usage of Facebook and the role it can play in people's lives. Facebook truly became a part of our everyday life.

## **Interview with Joanna (Transcript)**

Interviewer: Okay Joanna, so about my project. You may know I'm studying Facebook as a reflection on society, culture and what is happening. Why do people use Facebook? What does it represent? Is it important or not? So I'm going to ask you a few questions... You're on Facebook?

Participant: I am on Facebook, yes.

I: When did you join it and why?

P: I joined it about, I think it must've been about two years ago now... And I did it because everybody else was joining, so I didn't really like the idea of missing out. So I thought I'll join it and see if I can find any friends I've lost contact with over the years. I found a few and I've made a few new friends... Obviously people that I've never met, but I've had an interaction with on Facebook, and that's been quite nice, meeting people from different parts of the world. I've got a friend in Australia, one who lives in America, one who lives in Canada and people from all over the UK. So it is really nice actually meeting people.

I: So you're, you don't use it only to speak to people you know, but also to meet new...

P: Yeah. I am quite selective about the people I meet. Usually I'm a bit of a scrabble enthusiast so I quite often meet people playing scrabble... and the way the games are set up, you can actually make friends with people and replay repeated games with the same person. And you, its got a little chat-box, so you get chatting with the people you are playing, and it starts if you get a good word it's like 'oh, well done', and 'thank you very much', then the next game's like how've you been? You start building a conversation, like the same way if you're in a café and you start talking to a stranger then you start building conversation and then just gradually from there on you start making friends and then you swap details and you become friends on Facebook. Then you carry on having little conversations, and you have a little window into their life and they have a window into yours.

I: And so you play scrabble and meet new friends, but why else do you use Facebook?

P: Mostly, it's just keeping in touch with my friends, because at the time when I started on Facebook I was working nights a lot, so I didn't always see my friends when I wanted to. So to start off with it was to see my friends, like to keep in touch with them, because it was an easy way to keep in touch with them... instead of oh, I must phone this person then I must phone that person... because for one, you've got to have credit on your phone, then you've got to catch them in, then you've got to have time to sit down and have a chat to them and they might not have time and I might not have time, then it's actually... for me, even though there can be several hours between contact with people, it's kind of waving at people and the wave stays there until they come and collect it. It's much better than a phone call or text messaging for me, because you're not interrupting people's lives to contact them. What you're doing is you've got a space in your life where you can contact people, and when they've got a space in their life they can contact you back. You can have conversations with people over time in a way that you can't by phone, or when trying to meet up with people. It's difficult to get together and just sit there and have a chat, but on Facebook you can have a chat, and you know there are different ways of talking to people on Facebook, like you can do it in a public place or you can send

private messages and there's a chat box as well. Depending upon what time of day it is, how busy you are and how lively you want your conversation to be, it depends on how you use Facebook. So there are some people who most conversations they have are on the public forum, but there's one or two friends who I only talk to properly in the message box, or in the chat box. And I don't really have that many long conversations with them on Facebook publicly, because there are sensitive issues which we want to talk about, and it's difficult to actually sometimes get together and sit and have that conversation on the phone. And the Facebook chat box is free; you don't have to use up free minutes on your phone. So if we are both online at the same time it's as easy to use the message box as it is to actually phone somebody, and it's cheaper.

I: So basically you find it convenient to use nowadays. Don't you find that... you mentioned that it's easier, instead of phoning, texting or meeting, so do you think Facebook is replacing other forms of contact? And also now that people are busier? What are your thoughts about it?

P: My thoughts about face-to-face contact is that it's a shame, that Facebook is replacing face-to-face contact and I wish I had more time and my friends had more time, to actually have face-to-face contact with them... and I think that the reason that people don't keep in contact other than Facebook, is because everyone is really busy, you know most people, although were in the middle of a recession, most of the people I know are working full time, or working full time because they've got children, they have to carry around here, there and centre, they've got partners, they've got family members who aren't well and they're taken up with caring for those... so there's a whole host of reasons why they're busy, and I'm busy because you know, I'm working two or three jobs at a time, I'm at college, I'm busy and when I'm doing college work I'm kind of intent on it, and I can lose three days just by concentrating on projects, and I find it really hard break away from what I'm doing to go off and meet somebody, whereas if I'm in the middle of something and I need a ten minute break from it, I can use that to catch up with what everybody's doing, have a quick chat to somebody then go back to my work without feeling like I've distracted my day... because going out and meeting somebody takes at least a couple of hours, you know, you've got to decide where you're going to meet up, go there, have a chat and I feel more connected to my friends through Facebook than I do when I'm trying to organise going to see them.

I: But do you find that it's easier, or do you see some kind of change?

P: I don't necessarily think that it's a big change, I think that people... I think people travel more to work than they used to and I think that takes up a lot of time, and they seem to be working all the time, they have lots of activity going on around work and study, there's a lot of pressure on people to take extra study; to take extra qualifications and to do that in their own time. There's also the pressure to take, now a lot of my friends are at an age now where they've got kids, and there's pressure to take the kids to different kinds of activities and

involve them in social activities and that's very time consuming. So, I think... Facebook is replacing the socialisation that people used to have. People... I mean a lot of my friends are smokers and they don't really go to pubs anymore because they have to sit outside in freezing weather to have a cigarette, so they're not really that keen on going to the pub anymore. I was never that keen on going to the pub anyway, because they were really smoking and it was loud, and I don't really enjoy that kind of atmosphere. I'm quite a homebound and solitary person; I quite like being on my own and working on my own and being in my own space, and I don't really like that being invaded, but I do quite like socialising yet there aren't very many places that I like to go and socialise. And if you just kind of turn up somewhere to socialise, you don't always meet your friends or your friends haven't always got the time to come and things like that. Whereas on Facebook I can socialise as much or as little as I want to. It's all on my turn, the same way as it's on everybody else's turn, but I still get to keep in touch with my friends and I still get to spend some time with my friends and I'm not completely put off by them. So it enables me, even though I'm fairly solitary; I am a sociable person and I am quite gregarious but I've got to be in the mood for it, then I won't go on Facebook and I won't spend half an hour chatting to somebody on the instant messaging. So it gives me the opportunity to sort of be on my own, but at the same time to socialise in a way where I'm in control of how much time I spend there and what I do while I'm there and where I meet people, cause I meet them online, you know speaking to my friends online I don't have to waste hours and hours and hours sitting there, waiting around, being in a place that makes me feel uncomfortable, then going home again. I don't waste two, three hours of my day doing that, I spend twenty minutes doing that so I don't break off doing whatever I'm doing at home. Because my studio's as home as well, and a lot of my work is at home, so I find it easier to socialise through Facebook because I'm having a short tea break, rather than spending half a day, so for me it's much more convenient.

I: Yeah, it's really interesting now, and I would like to hear your thoughts about it because I am quite similar to you being a person who likes working from home, and for me Facebook is so convenient as sometimes you don't like going out for coffee... but I was thinking like, I mean do you notice a difference with Facebook, depending on the personality of the person... because like in your case and my case, I call myself a more introvert person and more solitary, but in Facebook it's much easier to communicate in Facebook. Like whether you notice that people are more like us, or people who more like to go out use less Facebook...?

P: I think looking at my friends and looking at my friends on Facebook, I think a lot of the friends on Facebook are people I used to work with and so the age range goes from twenty two, right the way to people in their fifties and sixties. I think the younger people tend to use it more like, 'we went out last night and had a really good time, look at what a good time we had' and talk about the time they had the night before and plan the next night out, so it's more like social

calendar for them, and it's more of a sort of organisational tool for them and a memories tool. As people get older and their lives change it's much more about, 'gosh my life is so busy, would really like to get together but haven't got time because there are all these wonderful things happening or all this horrible stuff happening – we'll get together at some point but in the meantime still keep in contact because we've got Facebook'. You know, and then as people get older still and their children grow up they start having a different life again and Facebook becomes, 'oh we're doing this next, or oh we're doing that next' and sharing experiences with friends, because you're off doing one thing and they're off doing something else, and you share the experiences and then there's kind of a round of it where people share their experiences and say, 'oh that's good, I might do that next year' or do that in a couple of months. So there's kind of information sharing and it feels like there's information sharing in the older generation. Then there's all the day to day stuff that people do, like sometimes I'm sitting answering e-mails and I'll go on Facebook for five minutes and then I think well I really need a cup a tea, and I'll literally post 'a nice cup of tea' on Facebook, because that's what's going through my head at that moment in time. I think a couple of times I've posted 'oh, I need a poo' and things like that, but it does depend what mood I'm in because sometimes I think, I'm a bit bored, somebody... I want somebody to entertain me you know... I want somebody to actually lift the mood a bit and do what I need to do. Because you know, sometimes you spend all day working on a project and then you think, 'oh, my brain is going to explode, it's going to dribble out of my ears', 'I really need a break from this, I'm bored', 'I need a cup of tea' is there anybody out there, and you look at your chat list to see who's online, then you can have a conversation with somebody and it can be completely irrelevant in the same way that any casual conversation can be irrelevant. Or it can be very important. I've got a friend at the moment who's in hospital and is extremely ill and is not going to get better, and that is really harsh for me to deal with because by the end of this year I will have no more friend – you know, she'll be gone. And you know, I'm still friends with her kids and husband, but the friendship is different from what I've got with her. And I'm having a really hard time with it, but I've got friends on there so when its two o'clock in the morning and I can't sleep because I'm worried about her there's always somebody I can chat to. There's always somebody I can tell, 'oh I'm having a really rubbish day, I went to see my friend and she was really down and I found it really hard to try and lift her spirits, because what do you say to somebody who's going to die?' And then other days I've had a really great day, she's been doing really well, really upbeat, I've produced something at work and it's like, 'yeah, I've had a great day, I want to share it with everybody' and I want to share everything that's been happening today. And I think for me, being able to share my day with people is like having them live with me without having to share a house with loads of people... it's that intimate at times. You know, where I may want to tell people I've done something I can. If I don't want to tell people that I've had the day from hell and I'm feeling miserable then I don't have to, I don't have to tell people that I'm

having a bad day. Quite often if I am having a bad day, I will tell people – I'll either put it on Twitter, because I'm on Twitter as well, and I blog... you know, I do the whole package and if I'm having a really bad day and I'm struggling then I will post that I've only just got out of bed and it's two o'clock in the afternoon... And I feeling like I'm in a deep, dark hole and I'm struggling, and I'll get loads of people who will remind me that I've been through this before and I will go through it again, and it's just part of the cycle of my illness, and that I just need to remember that, that I'm not stuck there forever that it is part of a cycle. And once I start remembering that its part of the cycle I'll start doing the things that help me get better and help me move forward... and that's really good because for me it's a whole range of things... being able to have a really intimate relationship with my friends, down to talking about toilet habits and how often I have a bath or go cut my hair and things like that. Right the way through to social and emotional support from my friends when I'm having a really hard time.

I: So you say you're really using it like for lots of things...?

P: Yeah. It's like having a family that you don't live with.

I: So you do it in everyday life?

P: Yeah, I mean effectively I've got one hundred and thirty something friends... all of those people visit me all of the time but they're not in my house; they're in my computer. So I don't have to wait to use the toilet or I don't have to wait to use the bathroom or argue about whose turn it is to do the hovering, because they all live in my computer and they're always there when I need them. Somebody's always there, somebody's always online, somebody's always there just saying I've had a rubbish day and I'll speak to them. So it is a completely two way street, a completely two way thing, but at the same time they don't live in my house so I still get the house to myself, and I can carry on having my personal space. So I get the best of both worlds; I get to have lots and lots of support all the time whenever I need it and I get to give lots of support whenever my friends need it, but I don't have to live with them.

I: but have you noticed the difference when you were working and now, like what you post as your status? For instance, you post things like 'I'm going for a poo' which is quite a personal thing.

P: I don't do that every day... It sounds like I do, but I don't. Yeah, it has changed quite a bit because my life has changed from six months ago when I was working with a lot of people. Because you know, a lot of my friends who are on Facebook are people who I used to work with. So my postings are very different now; they talk about work and rubbish, and how they're having a hard time at work and with all of the politics that happens in the NHS and I don't have to deal with that now so I go, 'ooh, I've had a great day', 'today I went shopping' or 'today I read a book' or 'today I watched tele all day because I feel a bit crap so I decided to have a day off'. And I can do that.

I: Yeah, I meant more about whether you were conscious about posting when you were working...?

P: Yeah, because I had confidentiality issues to deal with.

I: Do you think about what kind of impression you're making on Facebook?

P: Well that's quite interesting because I did have a disagreement with a senior member of staff about posting things of Facebook.

I: Oh, please tell me more about it.

P: I... You know I'm an artist, and I was doing portraits of people whilst I was on duty at work you see, and because of the nature of the job we sometimes had periods of four, five, six or sometimes and entire eleven hour shift where we didn't do anything where we were just waiting around for patients to come to us because it was an operating theatre. So I used to take... so it's a habit I used to get into of keeping my sketchbook with my all the time so that when I get an opportunity to draw somebody, even if it's just someone sat in a corner, I can sketch them. And my friends at work we're all really enthusiastic about me drawing them and doing sketchbook work, and they were really interested and enthusiastic about it and most of them would sit for me as I did sketches for them. And I said to everybody, 'is it okay if I put them on Facebook?' because I like to put them on Facebook, and everybody was happy to do that... if they weren't happy then I wouldn't have put it on. A member of staff who's not on Facebook and therefore not one of my Facebook friends found out that I was doing this and told me to take all of the pictures off. And I said 'well I've got permission to put those pictures on from the people they are of'. And they said 'yes but you haven't got my permission'. 'Well your permission doesn't count. Facebook is a social network and what I do in my spare time and in my private life has nothing to do with you'. And then she started threatening one of the people who I'd drawn picture of because it was like she was asleep, and it clearly says she's in the coffee room. I said she's not asleep, and how have you seen this picture? Because it's not open access to anybody, so have you been looking through my friends? And she said 'well I was shown it'. And then she bullied me over the course of a telephone call that she made from work to my home over a weekend when I wasn't on duty. She bullied me into taking the picture off. She wanted me to take all of my drawings off as she said it wasn't appropriate that I had some drawings on that I had on there. And I said, 'well they're nothing to do with work, they're to do with my own life and my development as an artist', and she said that they're not appropriate and I said that it's nothing to do with you. And this is in my private life, yes it's online but it's still in my private life and I've got my settings set so that only my friends can see what's on there – it's not public for public view. She's successfully bullied me into taking one picture off which she really objected to and I agreed to take that off but only because she threatened the person that the picture was of. She basically said to me that if I didn't remove the picture, the person whose picture it was of would get into trouble and she'd make sure of it. So I removed that

picture – I was not happy about it at all and made a complaint about her at work, about bullying and her phoning me at home which is actually against the rules – she is not allowed to call me at home unless it's something about a work-related issue and I said that this wasn't a work-related issue and it's just her interfering in my private life. So, at that point I did start getting really cagey about what I was saying online and what was posted, the images I was putting up. I did get very, very careful after that happened, and that as about a year and a half ago. Since I've left that job about four, five months ago, I now don't have the same issues of authority, job security, confidentiality... I don't have those issues anymore. I just put on what I like, say what I like and do what I like within the realms and boundaries of my own moral code and my own moral belief system. I don't post offensive things online but I mean if someone posts something offensive that I find offensive then I will tell them that it's offensive and ask them to remove it. Recently there was somebody asking me for my phone number from Mexico, and I thought it was a scam, because there are a lot of scams on Facebook and I joined a group and put comments on saying that I thought this was a scam... left it at that. I got a lot of flack for it from people and nasty messages telling me that I as a really heartless person. I didn't say anything negative about the guy who was asking for blood, all I said was that I thought it was a scam because there are so many of them on Facebook. Surely this is a fairly common blood group and he should be able to get a lot of blood from America. So I got backlash from it... but that's a part of it, where you'll ask a question and people will always take it the wrong way no matter where you are – whether you're in a café or whether you're in the library, the lecture hall or a bus stop. Sometimes you'll ask a question and somebody will hear it wrong and react to what they heard and shout at you. And I didn't apologise for asking if it was a scam, I apologised for causing any offence because that wasn't my intention – all I was interested in was protecting people that I knew had been scammed in the past. The person who set up the group I had a conversation with and she's quite rude to me to start off with, because you know my Facebook picture is not very flattering. Her initial message to me was who do you think you are? You've upset everybody, blah, blah, blah, and go on a diet you fat so and so. And I was like, for a start I thought it was a scam because it seemed to me a little bit dodgy that you were asking for blood donors in Mexico, when Mexico gets most of its blood products from America and he should be covered on his insurance for all of that so why are you asking for all of this? It just seemed dodgy to me, I didn't mean to cause any offence but I was just – you know, I've seen so many scams in the past – oh and don't call me fat, that's just rude and abusive and I will block you and report you for it. And she sent me a message back saying a lot of people were upset and misunderstood what you were saying and I'm sorry for calling you names. But by that time I'd blocked her anyway, so I'd got her last message just after I'd blocked her – she'd obviously sent it as I was blocking her, and then I've not heard anything from anybody, apart from this little boy who for two or three days sent me a message telling me I'm fat and ugly and I should just go and kill

myself for being so horrible. I think it's connected to that, because there's no other reason to get messages from a random person, so I reported and blocked them as well. But you know, I walk out of my house and get people insulting me so people insulting me on Facebook isn't going to bother me. There are tools on Facebook to stop people shouting at you, being rude to you, nasty and everything... it's called blocking the person, so the... I'm not so worried about being bullied on the internet, although I have seen other people being bullied on Facebook and thought it was appalling. But at the same time there are tools there to deal with it in a really sort of pro-active way, so... now I don't really edit myself much now, I used to but not now. Now I just say what I like, when I like.

I: It's interesting how it's... our professional status if your job influences what you do basically. That's why I think sometimes that Facebook is not actually that private. It's a big part of your current life.

P: Yeah, because when I'm doing my life blog it's like being naked in front of total strangers. And I'm sure, that if I was more public... I mean my profile is set to only friends, not even friends of friends; it's only friends, so you know I'm sure if somebody saw that they would wonder what on earth I was doing, and why I was talking about being naked in front of strangers and stuff... without knowing that that's actually my job, that I'm a professional life model and that's what I do. So it's kind of... I don't need to censorship myself as much as I used to because I haven't got that professional standard and I don't have to meet a level of professionalism anymore. And because my profile is set to only friends, I don't have to worry if it gets shown to other people because they don't know who I am. You can't share... my identity can't be shared with other people who are not my friends. I mean I've had so and so wants to be your friend so they can look at your artwork, and I've kind of said okay that's alright because it's a friend of a friend and it's somebody who I know and trust, and who wouldn't put me in touch with somebody who wouldn't you know, safe to know. So I've had a few people like that – some of my artwork goes onto groups as well, that I'm a member of on Facebook so...

I: Yeah, so you mentioned this scam thing on Facebook, where you thought it was a scam... so my first question is whether you do join some posts and groups and whether you participate within them and you mention art is related to your interests?

P: Well I'm in quite a few groups actually; I'm in a tattoo group, a textile artist group... I set up a couple of groups. I set up one called the Joanna... (name changed) appreciation society, because I found out that I wasn't the only Joanna... group on Facebook so I set that up so that anyone who has the name of Joanna... could join it. I've set up a group called Simon Cowell is the anti-Christ and should be destroyed, because I think he's ruining British music. And I've joined groups from a lot of animal protection groups – greyhound rescue groups, dog and cat groups because I've got so many pets. And other silly groups... University of Sheffield groups and things like that. One or two breast

cancer charity groups now, because of my friend in hospital... so there's quite a wide variety really, and I'm not actually that active within the groups. I just join them and look at them once in a blue moon to see what's happening and I get postings from them. I'm in the Stone Wall group which is a games group – so I get regular postings from them. I'm sort of happy to have them posting directly to me which they do. Mostly it's just a lot of the time it's just fun groups – silly or topical or things like that.

I: What do you think of these kinds of groups and campaigns; do you think it's changed anything in your life? Have you received these kinds of messages where you have to update your status as the colour of your bra?

P: I think it's good in keeping people aware of breast cancer, so every day you kind of see people posting a colour, and you think yeah that's about breast cancer, so it's keeping everybody aware of the impact of breast cancer and the importance of breast cancer research and maintaining your health and getting your breasts checked and things like that. My friend never checked her breasts even though there was breast cancer in her family. For me it's maintaining a profile of keeping everybody checking themselves and making sure they investigate every lump, bump and change, things like that. You know, it will wear down as all campaigns do, but I'm quite happy to post one word – a colour, every day of the bra I'm wearing – I'm quite happy to do that if it helps maintain some awareness. I know that some people will be getting bored of it already, especially when it's running for two days the same thing – that's really boring. Yeah, it is really boring for some people but for me it's a daily reminder of my friend and it's not that I need a reminder, it's just a reminder of the daily impact it has on the person that is affected in social, family networks and everything.

I: So in your opinion it does create awareness?

P: I think a lot of awareness is based around a lot of issues. My son's got a different interest on Facebook than me, and he informs me of things that I know nothing about, and I inform him of things that he doesn't know about. It's useful to stay aware of what is happening in the world in a way that's much more accessible and it's better than the following the news because the news is highly selective - you only get the reports that they want you to hear... and that's not in a paranoid way but just in terms of what interests the editors is what you get to see – it's not all that's happening in the world, whereas on Facebook the groups and with various different people having various interests in different things, you can find out what's really going on in the world and what's happening and what's affecting people's lives in reality because the fact that an Irish politician tried to kill herself after having an affair with a younger man really doesn't affect me that much, but you know... the knowledge that a man came back from Afghanistan with two legs missing and the local council refused him permission to build a bungalow in his granddad's back garden, even though nobody objected on the grounds that it wasn't a necessary building you know.. That kind of thing affects me, the fact that they're sending young men off to war and that

we're not taking care of them when they come back. There are a lot of Facebook campaigns around that and while I don't agree with the war in Afghanistan or the occupation in Iraq, I do support the soldiers who have gone out there and risked their lives, come back and nothing. To be treated like social below is beyond me. So you can have an opinion on Facebook and you can back it up and be supported in a much more immediate way than the rest of the world, and I think it makes people braver about expressing their opinion, because you're not face to face with somebody who might potentially hit you with a chair. If you're in a pub and you express your opinion about something... if I was in a pub and I said that the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan were wrong then people would hear that and they wouldn't hear any supporting issues that I would say afterwards. You know, they wouldn't hear anything about me saying I think it's awful that the soldiers are being treated on the way there, the way back and when they get here. People wouldn't hear that, all people would hear is that I said the war is bad therefore everything else I say is going to be negative, where in fact it isn't. But on Facebook there are lots and lots of groups such as hate the war, love the soldiers. And lots to support the soldiers for when they're coming back and they're not coming back with physical disabilities and scars, but mental scars as well, and they're not being supported, they're not being taken care of... not being paid enough to do it and they shouldn't be out there in the first place because it's a war based on lies. So I think it makes people braver and people's opinions clearer. I think it enables people to have opinions about things that they wouldn't have in a face to face forum, in the pub or in the real world they wouldn't say a lot of the things that they say... because they'd be frightened of getting shouted at or getting hit over the head, getting chucked out, getting ignored by their friends, whereas on Facebook it's a lot easier to express those opinions and justify them where you can join a group with people who have the same opinion as you and you feel more powerful because you know you're not the only one. So it makes you feel more braver about all the things that are important to you and all the things that you have opinions on.

I: Like you said it makes people brave and maybe more creative, for instance in your case do you mind that Facebook has access your account and have all your personal information?

P: Well they've got all my personal information anyway because I claim benefits, so they've got all of my personal information. They have my bank account details, they know how much I earn and they know which bills are paid and which ones aren't. If they're really so desperate to find bogie-men under the bed that they will investigate my Facebook account, then I really don't think they've got the right to do that when they should really be out you know... catching people and catching people with bombs in their hands. But let them waste their time, because I haven't got anything to hide and my opinions are my opinions and I'm entitled to them, and if they don't like my opinions, tough titty. I am a member of the people; I am a member of the society. I pay my bills mostly on

time... I have a right of freedom of speech. If they want to investigate what I'm saying then let them, but they can't stop me saying it. They might not like my opinions but they have no right to stop me saying them. I'm not doing anything illegal, I'm not doing anything immoral and I'm not doing anything to hurt anybody else, I'm just expressing my opinions which I have a right to do. And some people don't like my opinions – I don't like other people's opinions, but I'd fight till the death for them to have them. I also would fight until the death for my ability to disagree with them, because that's what freedom of speech is – I don't approve of censorship. If they want to see everything about my life, fine, you can see everything about my life, but now let me see everything about your life; let me see every expense you've claimed, let me see every detail of your life... oh, you don't want me to? Well don't look into mine. It's a two way street. The government can have as much freedom of information as it likes of my information – I want information of theirs. So... I am... the thing is I am a just an ordinary person living in a normal city, living a fairly average life, you know... why on earth would they waste their time on me? I don't suffer from paranoia and I know that there's a lot of people out there that go (gasp), they can find out everything about me... but what is there to find out? What do you do that's wrong, or what do you do that's against the government? Are there any sort of terrorist opinions? Any sort of terrorist affiliations? Anything that is construed? Or anything like that. And even if there is anything that is construed, that's them doing it, not you. They're not going to gun you down on the street... well they're not going to gun me down on the street. For a start, I look too wide so I have got a problem. I think their information quite often is so poor and the way they act from it is so inappropriate at times that it doesn't matter what information they have because they're going to deal with it in the wrong way anyway. I don't know, I'm not really that paranoid, worried or bothered. They can have whatever information they like on me. They've got a huge amount of information as it is... it doesn't make a huge difference to my life because they won't stop me from living the life that I want to live. It doesn't make look over my shoulder and worry that I'm going to get arrested anywhere, because I know I'm not doing anything illegal. I'm not doing anything to bring down this government in any way which isn't in my democratic rights.

I: you think we live in a democratic society?

P: Oh god, no. No, no, no. we are not a democratic country. If we were a democratic country we would have a referendum every week if we were truly democratic. You know, I would be able to walk into my MP's office at any time and I would be able to say, right, this is an issue that's very important to me and I want you to start doing something about it. If we were a democratic country, if I voted against somebody that I knew was going to get in, then my vote might actually count... Whereas it doesn't. If I chose not to vote, that would count as well if we were a democratic country as well, but it doesn't. so the government is empowered on the basis of a third of the people voting, and the majority of a third of those people voting for the government, but that's not democracy, that's

not a majority rule that's majority apathy. The reason people are apathetic is because the government's rubbish and they think there's no way to change it, and we're not living in poverty so why bother? So no I don't, I'm in no illusion that we're in a democracy. We're reasonably free. I know that we live in a free society and that I live in a society where I'm very privileged. I have my own house, I drive my own car, I can walk down the street most of the time and be pretty safe... I can wear whatever I like whenever I like, weather taken into account. I don't have to stay in the house unless a male member of my family comes out with me. I don't have to be afraid for my life if I step outside of the house on my own... I don't have to be afraid of my life if I step outside the house without a jacket on. I'm immensely privileged in this country but I'm also well aware that I'm not living in a democracy, and I accept the situation and accept that I have responsibilities as a citizen in this country as well as rights. And that I have a responsibility to take care of myself, my family and the people around me, and you know... and take responsibility for myself and my actions. A lot of people don't know that. A lot of people just never clicked on that you know, just never understand that they... along with all these rights that everybody demands, that they have responsibilities. I think that that's what's wrong with this country at the moment and that's what's wrong with the world is that people aren't taking responsibility for themselves. They just kind of go, nothing to do with me, somebody else did that...

I: I think they just want to live in their own worlds.

P: Our society's becoming infantilized and I think it's about time that as a society we grew the hell up and started acting like adults instead of expecting everybody to take care of us all the time. But because we have so many safety nets it's actually taken away our ability to be grown-ups. So people spend their entire lives thinking that the world owes them for example, oh, I fell over in the snow wearing my high-heels it's their fault for not gritting the floor, not my fault even though I was wearing stupid shoes, that kind of thing. People don't want to take responsibility because that means they have to be grown-up. People want to have fun all the time and play on their PlayStation all the time and go on the internet all the time, they don't want to actually do any work or be productive, pay their bills, they want to go and have fun all the time. They want money now, so... you know. I think as a society we're failing because nobody takes any responsibility and everybody expects everybody else to pay for stuff, and it's always somebody else's fault. There's way too much of that going on.

I: Yes, I agree with these problems.

P: Yeah, I hate it. When you walk down the street and there's these people with these jackets on and they say, have you had an accident in the past three years? Well yes of course I have. But I'm a grown-up, I take responsibility for my actions, I don't blame everybody else for it. And they don't really know how to deal with that, when you say, yes of course I've had an accident, I have accidents all the time. I'm very clumsy and I'm bigger than I realise I am and

you know, I'm in my forties so I probably need to wear glasses all the time, but I don't really want to because I'm a bit vain. So of course I've had an accident in the past three years, and it's my fault because I wasn't looking the right way I was walking, I was too busy talking on my phone and I tripped up a kerb, or I was doing this, doing that, and that's why I had the accident. Not because the council didn't fix the kerb, because that motorist was driving in a stupid way, it's because I wasn't being a grown-up and I wasn't being responsible for myself. There are situations where it's somebody else's fault and in that situation I would sue the arse off of them, but mostly my accidents are my fault. You know, if I'm walking along in the middle of winter chatting to somebody, not looking where I'm going and trip over and bang my knee, and end up with a massive huge bruise up and down my leg, and it was like hey, look at that. And I had so many people messaging me saying, are you going to sue the council? And it's like why would I sue the council, it was me that fell over because I was too busy gossiping as I was walking to college. I didn't look where I was putting my feet. Why would I sue the council over something I did? So... yeah.

I: Last question, I saw that what you put on your profile is information, do you think that what you put on your profile and what you post reflects your personality?

P: What, like the... you mean my photo?

I: No I mean what was important for you to include, what did you write when you did your profile?

P: Oh right.

I: Like what motivated you what to put?

P: Just what I was thinking about at that time. Although the things on there have changed now, because I change my mind every day about Facebook. So one day I'll be completely in love with my dogs then the next day I'll be completely in love with my sink. So it just depends on my mood really – so my profile reflects my mood when I set it up. I don't think I've changed it all that much. I did try and change it when I packed my job in, to reflect that I was self-employed, but I couldn't figure out how to do it. So it's not changed since I set it up. I think it still says that... I think the only things that are still true on there are that I'm female, I'm gay, I'm single and I'm in my forties. They're the only things that are still true... Apart from being a parent and having animals... I don't change it. I just don't change my profile, but like I said before, what I was thinking at that time was true for ten minutes when setting it up and now it's completely different again.

I: Are you concerned about how people perceive you on Facebook?

P: up to a point, yeah. I do want people to see me, but then people will always see what they choose to see, rather than what is actually there. So, people's vision and concentration are selective, so you know, I could be there saying that I'm having a really hard day, and say ooh I've done such and such and isn't it

great? So no, not really. My personal image, whether it be on the internet or on the outside world isn't really that important to me. I'm not self-obsessed about how people perceive me. I'm comfortable with myself and my body because I'm a life model, and I'm comfortable with where I go, who I speak to, my opinions. So I didn't really put a great deal of thought into my profile because I don't really put a lot of thought into my public persona because that's just me, what you see is what you get. About the most effort that I put into is my profile picture; I try to put something up that reflects how I'm feeling. And if I've got a silly picture of myself then I'll put it up. I changed my profile picture recently – I've had the same one for months, and I changed it because this is what I'd been doing recently, you know, don't I look funny? Don't I look funny in a dress that's far too tight, in a bra that's three sizes too small, with my cleavage out for everyone to see and looking dog-rough? Because that was a fancy dress party and that is what I wore, isn't that funny? So I have a huge sense of humour about my physical appearance, and I quite like to play up to that. Quite like to use it for comedy value and I want people to laugh at that picture because it's a dreadful picture of me, but it's purposefully dreadful. I wanted to look dreadful because that was the fancy dress costume. So more than anything it's kind of showing my comfort with myself. I think I'm happy and contented with myself mostly, as much as anybody could be. I like the idea of being able to play with that identity on Facebook, but it's not anything that's deep and meaningful, it's just, ooh I'm bored, shall I change my profile picture? Oh, that's a good photo I'll stick that on there. I don't really think hard about what I'm putting on.