EXTERNALISED POWER ON FACEBOOK

EKATERINA NETCHITAILOVA*

ABSTRACT

Following the recent scandal involving Facebook and Cambridge Analytica it’s time to look again at what sort of power users on Facebook and other online social networks really have. They have the possibility to join the site for free, create content and exchange pictures with relatives and friends. However, while Facebook changed its privacy policy following the scandal, it remains long and ambitious and clearly states that it still collects data of its users. Sites such as Facebook operate within soft-capitalism where in exchange of free service we provide content and information about ourselves. When we join something for free, it creates an illusion of power on the part of the users, while ultimately, it takes the real power away from them and gives it to corporations. I propose to call power that we can find on online social networks externalised power.

Keywords: Facebook, power, capitalism, externalised power, Panopticon, data-mining, privacy.

INTRODUCTION

Facebook is a very accessible medium. Anyone with Internet access and an email address can create a profile on Facebook. In the UK, for instance, where the penetration of the Internet is very high (82.7% of the population according to Internet World Statistics) Facebook is very largely used and is very accessible. The UK belongs to the ten countries where Facebook is used the most (Statista, 2018).

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

* PhD., Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom. epetrovna@gmail.com
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. It gives the users the feeling that they are in control and possess real power while navigating the net.

The recent scandal, however, where it was revealed in March 2018 by the New York Times and the UK’s Guardian and Observer that data of millions of Facebook users had been leaked to a consulting firm Cambridge Analytica, highlighted the lack of control of the users of Facebook over their data. This brings once again a question as to whether we have any power on the Internet and online social networks. Can we talk about any power while when we create content, communicate with friends and share our pictures, we ultimately don’t know who is looking at data posted by us and whether someone collects information on us as at any given moment.

What kind of power do we have on Facebook?

**METHODOLOGY**

This article is mostly theory-based elaborating on the notion of power and proposing a new concept of ‘externalised’ power for the power users have on online social networks. Some qualitative data was collected for the purpose of this study, reflecting the views of Facebook users themselves. In total fifteen interviews were conducted with additional questions sent following the scandal with Facebook. A public group dedicated to Panopticon was analysed as well.

**CENTRALISED AND DIFFUSE 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 (1990), 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. 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.

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 necessarily 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. 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, Iran, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Also, in some countries, Facebook is banned at the workplace, to prevent employees ‘wasting’ time on the site.

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.

**EXTERNALISED POWER**

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. What the author says 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

At a first glance because we choose ourselves whether to join Facebook or not and which content to share, it can appear that the audience on Facebook is active and creative.

 Debord (1992) 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-consumerists 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 in 2008 by approaching changes ironically and through a play of words.

"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, Facebook did maintain its new privacy policy despite controversy and soon after all profiles were visible to everyone by default apart from if one manually corrected privacy settings. Moreover, the recent scandal with data mining revealed serious privacy issues. 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 was 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). He still has 59.913 Class A shares in Facebook and is a supporter of Donald Trump (Reuters, 2017).

Later Facebook received $13 million in venture capital from Accel Partners. Jim Breyer, former president of Accel was on the board of National Venture Capital Association together with Gilman Louie, who was 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).

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 February 2012 Facebook announced partnership with four companies that collect behavioural data. These companies included 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
A 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).

As a corporation Facebook positions itself as a company trying to build greater community, more connectivity and which will always be free for its users. For instance, when one opened Facebook page in 2013, one was greeted with the following sentence: “Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life” (Facebook, 2013). Nowadays, a following greeting welcomes the users: “It’s free and always will be” (Facebook, 2018). 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 comes from the CEO of a company where revenues from advertisement represent more than 90% of total revenues (Facebook, 2018). Following the scandal with data-mining and involvement of Cambridge Analytica, Mark Zuckerberg immediately released a statement on his Facebook profile apologising to the users and a new privacy policy was put in place on the 19th of April 2018. All this 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). The new privacy policy standing at 4,200 is still long and ambitious and as Laura Hautala (2018) states, it is “one of those privacy policies you probably don’t read…”

For instance, the new privacy policy clearly states that it collects data such as religious and political views of the users. It actively discourages to opt out by putting the blue ‘Accept and Continue’ in bright spot. One can go to ‘Manage Data Setting’ button where Facebook makes such an argument that it deters the user from deleting any sensitive information. The same goes to ads. Facebook claims that it doesn’t allow advertisers to target the user based on sensitive info, however, it appears that the profile will still be targeted based on personality categories with the only option being removing any political and religious preferences all together. One can’t leave this info on one’s profile without that Facebook can use it.

This reminds us of another scandal that Facebook was involved with when Facebook had to remove its application called Beacon. 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
Externalised Power on Facebook

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.

Facebook also apologised after the recent scandal with data-mining, but it showed how little power Facebook’s users have over their data and ultimately over how the site is run.

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 technique 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

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. 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. The recent scandal surrounding Facebook only confirmed that we are indeed being watched.

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, obblative and individualizing. "This form of power is salvation oriented (as opposed to political power). It is obblative (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.

As a consequence, 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.

And while some people left the network following the recent scandal with data-mining many other users decided to stay due to the above considerations. Consider, for instance, what some users told me on the question about whether the data-mining affected their decision to stay on the network.
User 1: I was very annoyed that my info was used to prop up a failing government and skew 2 elections. The referendum was absolutely crucial to the future of this country and the young people who live here, as well as the people who have moved here from Europe and across the world to build our society and prosperity and using information they had no right to collect and use, they cheated. I’ve been more circumspect when doing quizzes and playing games. I would leave the platform completely if I didn’t have so many international friends as it’s the easiest way to keep in touch with them.

User 2: Lately FB just posts or reposts ads from sites, I see very few personal updates and I’m getting bored with it. I won’t leave it only because of my family and friends in Bulgaria who enjoy the photos I upload from my travels, as rare as they are.

User 3: I have been following the news about Cambridge Analytica and I watched some of Mark Zuckerberg’s testimony. I do think it is worrying how the data was released but understand that they don’t allow this any longer, so I am not so worried about it now. I won’t leave Facebook as I don’t release very private information publicly on here, so I think if I use Facebook carefully I am not worried about using it.

Many other users shared the same views, that they are worried that their data might have been compromised but it isn’t enough reason to leave the network since they don’t want to miss on what their friends are doing, they want to upload pictures for family and friends, and be aware of the events around.

This corresponds as to why people join the network in the first place.

Joanna, a user of Facebook, 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 user, 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).

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, as the recent scandal involving Cambridge Analytica showed, 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.

**CONCLUSION**

In the above sections I proposed to see power that users have on Facebook as 'externalised power'. ‘Externalised’ power is a power which gives illusion that we are in control while in reality the real power belongs to the state and corporations. This form of power can be seen clearly in how Facebook is run. We join it voluntary and for free, can create our own content, communicate with friends and relatives, and upload numerous pictures. All this provides fun and entertainment. However, while we provide content we also provide data for numerous corporations and governments and as the recent scandal around Facebook and Cambridge Analytica showed our data can be misused. Facebook almost immediately changed its privacy policy but it remains long and ambitious. Moreover, the whole business of Facebook is based on ads, which means that we are constantly targeted with advertisements and our data is still being used by numerous corporations. This takes real power away from the user who already has no say over how Facebook and similar sites are run. The fact that we feel forced to join and are reluctant to leave such sites as Facebook leads to normalization of surveillance and passive acceptance of soft capitalism under which corporations such as Facebook operate. All this takes power away from the users, and the only power we can talk about is externalised power, where we feel free because we can create content but ultimately the real power belongs to a corporation operating the social networking site.
REFERENCES


WHO OWNS FACEBOOK? [online]. Last accessed on 23 April 2018 at http://whoownsfacebook.com