The Precarious Citizen
Control and Value in the Digital Age

Katharine Sarikakis

In what follows I aim to highlight the issues of value and control in socialisation processes facilitated by the new social media, by interrogating the nexus of leisure and work, surveillance and privacy policy as core factors in the conceptualisation and application of an extended critical approach to citizenship.

The context of online social networking is an exemplary perhaps metaphor for the connection of the corporeal, emotional and intellectual nodes of human beings, in their forming of a company of a notional 'we', a community, a society. Body, soul and society, the theme of this conference, each separately but also as an integrated scheme occupy an interesting position in the debates surrounding online social networking, At a first glance it would appear that all three terms may be conspicuous by their absence – virtuality is less concerned with the physical and corporeal. On the other hand, as far as 'society' is concerned, there are views that no society or community can be of real substance in online interactions. Nevertheless, body and society as terms may present us with less difficulty to grasp, or accept. Soul is a different matter: we do not 'see' or 'measure' it; we cannot 'observe' it with the scientific tools – we do not know if one exists! For sure, it is philosophy that has most productively dealt with the question of soul and of course religions that talk most confidently about its existence. Religious teachings and practices are bound with codes of morality that must be acted upon to be of value. For soul is understood as the immaterial breath of life of human beings, indeed, as Plato professed the soul is the essence of a living being. Aristotle rejected the duality of body and soul of Platonian or Pythagorian teachings: for Aristotle, the soul is not something separate from the body but rather an actuality of the living body, related to growth and reaching one's own potential. The soul is a set of functions that bring the intellect together with intuitive senses about the place of humanity in the natural world and the cosmos. This actuality of personhood has come to pertain to citizenship debates in the context of globalisation, human mobility and informational and technological connection.

Citizenship is the crossroads of the material and symbolic conditions under which we make sense of and further construct the world. These are the conditions under which individuals, cultures and societies are called to exercise their free will, shape their lives, define their identities, occupy spaces with some sense of belonging and find some space within them to dream. Of course, this does not mean that any of these factors are static

– indeed both the conditions, material and symbolic, and the people, as individuals or in communities, are in a constant flux. However it is also neither the case that the directions in which these changes take place are completely unpredictable. Rather, the variety of experience and difference are integral parts of the truth; they manifest the points of departure for personal understanding and evaluation of, and response to the world. Citizenship, entailing political as well as economic, cultural and social dimensions, is the vehicle for the expression of those standpoints through the individual's capacity to 'exercise' it.

Some of the most crucial elements of citizenship are to be found in work as an activity which not only provides structure in human life, or simply exploits human capacity for profit, but also functions as a mechanism for self-realisation, the making of one's identity, sometimes even offers a sense of purpose. Two other crucial elements are the right to property and that of self-governance. For this discussion, the latter two indicate the level of control over one's own destiny and one's own self, including the choice to work and to maintain and protect one's own integrity and dignity.

The present discussion is concerned with these aspects of citizenship in relation to social media. It situates online social networking within a complex web of work, production, consumption and regulation as determining factors of the quality of lived experience.

Work, but not as we know it

Work has been inextricably related to citizenship – and leisure, although often not in neatly defined ways: In traditional forms of work–life relationship, the boundaries between work and leisure time for women and disadvantaged social classes, not to mention the racialised subject, have been less clear, with domesticity, child rearing and the private sphere of the home leaving very little space to true leisure. In the Fordist stage of capitalism, however, recognised forms of work, hence excluding the domestic or child-rearing and other care related tasks, and leisure constitute the interconnected elements of accumulation. Work generates capital through production of goods, and leisure continues this task through their consumption of material and symbolic goods. That work is also a crucial element of citizenship as understood and applied in its Western liberal form can quickly be established when we look at the limiting legal framework of rights that can be enjoyed by recognised i.e. documented citizens in nation states: right to work refers to a citizens' status or legality of migration and is an exclusive right.

In late capitalism however, whereby Fordist and Postfordist forms of production are in operation, the work of those under the approval of a national authority depend on those whose labour supports and maintains them, those outside a nation state. In the affluent pockets of the West the promotion of flexible, choice based work facilitated by information technologies – or at least this is what the rhetoric is about- is realised because of a complex set of labour dynamics where individual choice is far from the definitive factor. To facilitate the production of technologies that are used to enhance individual 'choice' and 'creativity' in the West other mechanisms are involved in the international division of labour: for one, we have the importation of labourers to the silicon valleys of the Global North under questionable legal conditions; or the export of labour to workers without real choices in the Global South. On a macro level, therefore, we have the silent fates of workers and in particular women, whose labour

in sweatshops of technological hardware stock the 'symbolic analysts' and 'knowledge workers' desks.

Let us consider these examples:

A 25 year old worker in Foxconn Technology Group a company producing Apple's iphone committed suicide when one of the 16 iphone prototypes he was responsible for went missing. The company itself searched Sun's apartment (http://www.nzherald.co.nz/mobile-phones/news/article.cfm?c_id=261&objectid=10586119);

In 2008, in a less tragic story, a female factory worker of the same company forgot to delete a test-photograph of herself on a mobile phone, which was sold to a customer in Britain. The worker's first reaction was *fear* that she will be sacked.

In 2005, the UK-based Catholic Agency of Overseas Development published a damning report on the conditions of work in the factories of Dell, Hewlett Packard and IBM in Mexico, China and Thailand. Pregnancy, homosexuality, connection to a labour union or bringing labour claims, are some of the reasons for dismissal or non-hire in the factories. Harassment, physical and psychological abuse, humiliation, discrimination and slave-like working conditions and pay are the norm. All this compounding to the pay gap between a worker making hard drives for Dell who was paid $2.50 a day, and the CEO of Dell who earned $13,000 a day.

In the meantime, here in the West, the rhetoric of flexible labour of the symbolic analyst places mothers, young people and the class of the new 'creative' worker on the pedestal of choice over where and when and how to work, with the facilitation of communication technologies and software. Gregg (2008), Mosco (2007) and others have discussed both the media representations of this new format of work, and its realities and consequences for workers and markets in the Global North. The new world of the creative industries consists of workers constantly on-the-go, a demand to be continuously contactable, the crushing down of boundaries between work and life or leisure time, the precarity of labourers and insecurity of jobs, the expectation for continuous work on one's life's story as expressed on a CV; deskilling, casualisation, fractured hours, semi-wages and lack of benefits and of proper social welfare provision for dependents or in times of need. These are the web-designers, computer software programmers and analysts, communication interns and others upon which the operation of internet based companies such as Social Networking Sites (SNS) are based and define the context within which the use of the websites takes place.

On a micro-level, I am interested in exploring the actualisation of another kind of work, which is performed by individual users, but which is understood as leisure time. I am referring to the work of millions of individual users in developing, sustaining SNS and turning them into sites for profit-making. There are several levels on which consumers or users' work is utilised to maintain the functioning of a market circuit arranged around the need for human connection, as well as importantly around the exercise of citizenship through expression and participation in the global public digital sphere.

On one level, the proliferation of SNS such as Facebook requires the time, energy and input of a large number of individuals. Consumers utilise the functions offered by technology, adapt their own ways of expression into the prearranged formats of applications and a particular form of interactivity. Reaching out to friends and acquaintances worldwide is a new and exciting way of socialisation and leisure. As media scholarship has candidly recognised consuming leisure is not necessarily a passive activity in that

it has engrained competences, skills and attention that require a pre-existing cultural capital as well as the capital to invest in communication technologies that enable this form of socialisation and leisure consumption.

New applications and invitations to support new features are promoted regularly through SNS, which in turn generates consumption at the level of PC/computer equipment and peripheral communications devices such as cameras or mobile phones. If the demographics offered by Facebook are accurate, 250 million people around the world are classed as active users, 40% of which reside in the USA, while 2/3 of all users are women (over 63%). This equals an immense source of personal, creative, mental, emotional, leisure work that takes place, and is in many ways typical of the 'creative' economy (Greggs 2008): whereby the creative worker, in this case one where work is not even named as such, not only provides valuable flexible patterns of input in a production line of symbolic or abstract produce but it also maintains the trading of physical produce. In the knowledge economies of the West, information is the raw material.

For SNS accumulation of information is pursued through registration of users; market surveys receive feedback through fans' responses to interestingly presented games or applications. The proliferation of the consumption of ads is achieved via an increased watchers/users base; further utilisation of applications and input of personal information adheres to the monitoring of the self and of the moment and context as well as the personal, one's own appreciation of the context. Consequently, a second order feedback is generated to collected information and the cycle starts again. In the meantime, the user has invited their friends to sign up. The next cycle of content generation grows at an exponential rate, whereby production and consumption are blurred, completing each other (Harvey 1990).

The drive to produce what is to be consumed is embedded in the architecture of the 'code', that is as Lessig argues, the software and hardware that make cyberspace what it is. This code is also what 'regulates' cyberspace (Lessig 2006). The code, I add, brings the idea of separation between work/leisure under question. Andrejevic (2002) has argued that not only watching, i.e. consuming leisure, but also being watched, therefore being monitored in consuming leisure, constitutes not wasteful, but profit generating labour. This is due to making available the *bodies* of consumers in homes and private spaces – as is the case with those in shopping malls or superstores- sourcing from human beings their *physical presence* and *mental focus*. To that I want to add two things: not only the acts of watching and being watched are forms of profit generating labour, but also the very act of socialisation which does not, at first glance, appear to 'consume' anything. Second, the seemingly intangible, yet resourceful 'soul' of the labourer is brought into the labouring process, perhaps more intensely and comprehensively than in any other process of labour, production or even consumption. As per Aristotle's definition, the soul, our intellect coming together with intuitive functions to help us understand our place in the world, is perhaps becoming a driving force in the generation of endless, authentic or spontaneous content for the wheels of SNS to keep moving. Actual, round-the-clock, cross-border, manual, intellectual and emotional labour feeds the code, producing millions of pages, generating an unprecedented amount of personal and social data, which would have been otherwise untappable with the methods and means of market research. Content around this data is perhaps not yet a commodity directly profitable, although this is not necessarily true for the immediate future. Its immediate

sell-and-buy, supply-and-demand capacity is organised momentarily around more familiar forms of commerce, such as advertisements and applications, as add-ons on the sites. Notably, as the Facebook blog itself declares *'we have a small community that provides powerful advice and learnings around product development and marketing'* (http://blog.facebook.com/ under the name of Shaykat, a fb intern).

Moreover, there is another dimension to the content, that of a self-generating matrix for the constant *updating* on one's and also group's status. This sort of content conveys information on thoughts, moods, location, plans, habits and life experiences. It also demonstrates gaps in knowledge or informational needs. It generates responses to deeply personal and private aspects of the soul, from seemingly banal music preferences to political views and religion or everyday routines. It is of course important to note that the 'seemingly banal' or mandane is that which creates demographics: banal information is that which involves patterns, such as sets of habits, routines, repetition of routes, choices, tastes and all the potential commercial activity and market interaction that goes with that. The generation of endless data, alongside with personalia in digital forms such as photos, videos or poems and 'thoughts' feed the machinery of production, rearticulation and updating of records, marketing, consumption. Facebook based or hosted companies prepare tailor made ads with the photos of ourselves and our friends on items and services of interest to you: the personification of the consumer, much like amazon's message 'welcome Katharine, we have suggestions for you' attains a new meaning: we, ourselves, not only produce what we consume in the most literal sense of the word, not only we consume the technologies that will allow further consumption, not only do we avail ourselves in body and mind to the world of advertising, we *even produce the ads* that sell us products while addressing us with our first names.

Privacy, but not as we know it

This labour however has a further re/generative purpose and next to that of social labour in maintaining the, a, community in some shape and form hence sustaining the base on which further, i.e. future, consumers can be groomed, products can be tailored, market models can be developed. Opening up one's social circle to a computerised system of data retention and monitoring multiplies the system's effectiveness of reach in unprecedented grades. By creating communities or joining existing ones, we translate our friends' contact and personal data into a machine readable format, kept and managed by companies that are effectively unaccountable as to the use of this data. Invitations to friends to join, result in the retention of their data even if individuals decide not to accept this invitation to join facebook. By affiliation – whether sustained or failed- one's personal data become property of third parties. The privacy policies of SNS are at best user-unfriendly, at worst abusive in their power to log information without the explicit consent of the user, as in some cases they leave no possibility to retrieve or claim back information already volunteered. A new enterprise in the making under the auspices of Facebook is now seeking to introduce those declared as 'singles' to each other through various friends' networks. Advertisements are created on the combination of the availability of stored data, aggregated and personalised demographics, while the system of advertising and marketing is based on the specific architecture of privacy policies: not just settings, as individually controlled, but in terms of privacy policy's very code.

> Monitoring to produce searchable data will become the default architecture for public space, as standard as street lights. (Lessig 2006: 208)

To some, the very idea of search is an offense to dignity (Lessig 2006: 211), the same way physical search by the police or the worker's apartment by his own employers is an intrusion of private space and the effective cancelation of one essential part of citizenship, the power to have *control over one's own*, such as private personal data.

Individual protection of privacy is incompatible with this market model. There is a paradox here: at the same time States enhance surveillance techniques and scopes under the rubric of terror or security and global alliances demand retention of private data for commerce 'security', individuals are left with little say over what happens to their data. Moreover, even more paradoxically perhaps, consumers volunteer large chunks of personal information in exchange for convenience and market 'offers'. Some allowances are also made by well intended citizens in the name of security and law and order. However, few guarantees are offered to the entrapped or well intended citizen as to what remains of their privacy: once information is passed on to companies, personal data usage is effectively uncontrollable by the citizen. Submission of power takes place through submission of personal information (and its subsequent appropriation of) submission of labour generating consumer time.

There is a regularisation process of a new form of a regime of accumulation, whereby this new production mode is powered through the very code of cyberspace, that is the architecture of software and hardware that prompts specific forms of interaction with others. At the same time it obscures the process through which this market interaction takes place. The space of virtual connection is at odds with the consequences of materiality – though only deceptively. In reality, locality of consumption disguises the globality of transactions under uneven and complex conditions. Overall, as a 'code', the regulation regime on privacy and surveillance is directly linked to the activities of corporate actors, as they interact with the state and their most powerful constellation of states globally and through the withdrawal of the state in enforcing privacy protection. In recent months, the European Commission stated its intention to issue an infringement procedure against the UK government over the case of Phorm. Phorm is an American based company previously involved in ad-and spyware that developed a programme which intercepts internet trafficking on individual users' IPs' analyses the text of websites visited and proceeds with what we call behavioural targeting, with adverts depending on the mood, tastes and interests as derived from personal use. Just days before the beginning of the investigation on Internet privacy by UK MPs and peers of the All Party Parliamentary Communications Group, the main signed up UK ISPs – BT, TalkTalk, and Virgin Media – decided to not proceed with Phorm, due to public outcry and the intervention of the European Commission. The collaboration between ISPs, Phorm and online advertisers, as well as websites, is expected to generate millions in the countries where this will be applied, already counting 15. According to the BBC, documents released under the Freedom of Information Act show frequent dialogue between Phorm and the Home Office which was interested in the technology. The Home Office is quoted in asking Phorm for its opinion of its legal position in relation to the technology and the reaction of its clients. BT and Phorm had run secret tests in 2006 and 2007 (BBC 2008).

Previously an assault against the normative justification of the protection of human rights by UK government in December 2005, on the grounds of anti-terrorism in a speech

given to the European Parliament was empowered by the approval of the retention of telecommunication data on an EU level. Here one of the most powerful groups, the Creative and Media Business Alliance (CMBA), which includes EMI, SonyBMG and TimeWarner, has lobbied the EU to extend data retention to investigate all crimes, not just for crimes such as terrorism (Wearden & Gomm 2005). The concern here is closer to perceived lost profits and a need to control the telecommunications market, but the alliance between state and TNCs leaves citizens' private spaces open to intrusion, control and surveillance. The individual 'disappears...into a probability' and the 'range of types of threats to freedom of speech is expanding' in the modern informational State (Braman 2006).

In the immediate future, control may not occur as an isolated case on the grounds of a 'crisis' ('war on terror' or financial crisis) but of a broadly normalised redefinition of the relationship between State and individual, and the market. On the one hand and on a global level, the State withdraws control over transnational media while *regularising* the sector's *public* activity. Examples include light-touch regulation on production processes, transnational trafficking of private data for e-commerce, international trading allowances (Mosco & McKercher 2007, Sarikakis 2008, Chakravartty & Sarikakis 2006, Braman 2004, Artz & Kamalipour 2003). On the other hand, it focuses on *private* behaviour and individual wrongdoings, such as through copyright policies, privacy, censorship, and leisure (Lyon 2005, Zittrain 2005, Cameron & Palan 2004, Sarikakis 2004, Sidak 2004, Bonetti 2003). Lawrence Lessig's description of the pontentiality of 'normalisation'of the population which is being monitored echoes concerns raised by civil rights groups, journalists and ordinary citizens. The argument here is one of the loss of real choice, autonomy and equality.

> The observing will affect the observed. The system watches what you do; it fits you into a pattern; the pattern is then fed back to you in the form of options set by the pattern; the options reinforce the pattern; the cycle begins again.(Lessig 2006: 220)

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