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The city without gates: Facebook and the social surface

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MSc in Global Media and Communications

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The city without gates: Facebook and the social surface

Andrew Crosby

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research project is to improve our understanding of digital sites of social interaction, particularly as they relate to existing ideas of social space. I argue that new, social Web platforms may constitute a new form of social space – a ‘social surface’, which coats, permeates and links almost every aspect of our digital, physical and social existence. Using Facebook as the site of analysis, interviews were conducted in two phases: first, respondents were asked draw a ‘map’ of Facebook; second, a semi-formal discussion was conducted regarding the choices made in drawing their map, the transcript of which was analysed according to thematic principles. The purpose of this article is twofold: first, it seeks to assist in refining researchers’ inconsistent conceptualisations of digital social life, and, second, it looks to contribute to an increasingly innovative range of research practices within the Media and Communications field. This study found that the framework established by the social surface was, for the group interviewed, useful in conceptualising Facebook. However, its wider utility could not be ascertained, given the limitations of the relatively small data set.

INTRODUCTION – SOCIAL SPACE AND THE NEW WEB

Where does the city without gates begin?
(Virilio, 1991: 19)

Physical spaces have historically provided the setting for almost all social interaction, thus constituting a significant part of the foundation of society itself. As the basic “settings for interaction” (Thrift, 1996: 81, emphasis removed), spaces mould our understanding of each other, and therefore of the world itself.

The impact of this upon social life can be difficult enough to assess and analyse when it takes place in the concrete, solid world of the ‘real’ and physical. What happens, though, when social interaction occurs outside the limits and exigencies of the physical space? With the ever-accelerating development of communications technologies, we have seen the settings and modes of socialisation change beyond recognition at incredible speed. From early cave paintings, through the development of inks, to the printing press, steam press, cameras, telephones, televisions, radios, and now the Internet, the technologies of social interaction are forever shifting and evolving well beyond the limitations of the spaces they inhabit.

Virtual places, such as the social networks so many of us use every day, have revolutionized the way we communicate to an extent perhaps unseen since the advent of email, or even the telephone. Having a Facebook account and a smartphone gives us the ability to share our lives with hundreds or thousands of others, and to stay in touch with friends and family, at almost any time and in almost any place. It lets us interact with people through our own photos, videos, audio and text, as well as through content created by others. From the most public things to the most private, sites like Facebook, Instagram, Vine and Twitter have fundamentally changed the way an enormous proportion of our society interacts.

This dissertation constitutes a preliminary study addressing the broad question: in light of previous understandings of the sites of social interaction as spatially defined, how can we conceptualise the social sites of the digital world? I intend to address the issue of whether we can consider online places to be ‘locations’ in much the same sense as a local pub or café, and therefore understand their spatiality as such. Shaun Moores argues that they are essentially the same, describing them as ‘a practical and emotional accomplishment’ (Moores, 2012: 58). However, this is a somewhat

unsatisfying answer – as we shall see, much of the discursive construction of place and location has informed the language of digital experience.

In this paper I will argue, through an analysis of the social networking service Facebook, that new, social Web platforms constitute a new form of social space – something I have termed a ‘social surface’, which coats and permeates almost every aspect of our digital, physical and social existence.

At the core of the research are interviews with eight people, within which they draw and discuss a ‘map of Facebook’. This map provides a platform from which I can examine attitudes and thought-processes relating to the site, app and wider social network. Using the information that this yields, I can in turn develop a framework for understanding the ways in which Facebook functions as a place where people interact.

The purpose of this research is twofold. First, I intend to add to and help refine researchers’ somewhat inconsistent conceptualization of digital social life, creating some scope for future, larger studies along similar lines. Second, I hope to contribute to an increasingly innovative range of research practices within the Media and Communications field. By providing a tactile, intuitive and physical means for my interviewees to express their understanding of Facebook, in combination with more traditional face-to-face interviews, I will be able to approach the debate from an entirely new angle, and thus generate new insights into the nature of digital social practice.

There is little doubt that social experience in the digital era differs greatly from that in the world that existed before. It is vital then, that we continually create and innovate in our research practices. Through this dissertation I intend to simultaneously improve our understanding of how social space functions within digital environments, as well as adding to the canon of creative research practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It will be useful at this point to establish a genealogy of conceptualisations of the sites of social interaction through the last century or so of social theory. By discussing already-existing notions of space – first urban, and then digital, examining the links and contradictions between the two – a conceptual framework should emerge. This will serve us in researching Facebook users' conceptualisations of the sites they inhabit.

Urban Space

Here it is useful to return to the literature around social or, more specifically, urban space. During the 20th century the city, perhaps inevitably, became the essential frame for conceptualisations of space. As people in developed nations followed employment opportunities to the cities, thus causing societies to become increasingly urbanised, the city developed into a remarkably useful site for the analysis of social practice.

Michel Foucault provides a neat starting point here. While his book *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1991) is perhaps best known for its use of Jeremy Bentham's 'Panopticon' prison design as a metaphor for broader social control (Foucault, 1991: 200-209), Foucault also uses it to make a number of key arguments regarding the segmentation, ordering and discipline of space. This constitutes part of his theory of the disciplinary society, wherein a 'design of subtle coercion' brings about an efficient 'discipline-mechanism' – the internalisation of socially normative behaviours (Foucault, 1991: 209). By defining both real and figurative spaces through 'enclosure' (Foucault, 1991: 141) – the building of literal or metaphorical walls around a space – authorities were able to better control those within them, and therefore to impose simple social and organisational order. People and objects could be defined by where they were, and relative to others in the same or different segments of a space.

Crucial to this was the metaphorical tabulation of people and objects within a given space according to certain categorisations or other factors. Foucault argues that in order to effectively manage circulation within a space you must be able to quickly and easily break it down to smaller, more easily regulated parts, regardless of whether the setting is a town, school, hospital, port or prison (Foucault, 1991: 144-146). These

parts do not necessarily need to be physical – rather, any 'unit of domination' (Foucault, 1991: 145), whether literal or conceptual, can serve to 'organize ... an analytical space' (Foucault, 1991: 143).

When conceptualising the functioning of power, later writers influenced by Foucault tended to focus on his concept of security, which refers to 'the problem of circulation' (Foucault, 2009: 21), that is: 'the temporal and the uncertain, which have to be inserted within a given space' (Foucault, 2009: 20). This notion highlights the difficulty of strictly regulating physical space in a swiftly modernising world, given the increasing fluidity of movement within, through and between spaces, older notions of disciplinary control, while still relevant in many situations, found themselves supplanted by newer ideas related to the importance of what Deleuze refers to as 'multipliers of control' (Deleuze, 2007: 322), designs of transport, technological and other infrastructure intended to allow apparent relative autonomy to their users while passively shaping their behaviours. While disciplinary frameworks are still useful in some contexts, they have been displaced somewhat in media studies literature by these more indirect mechanisms of social control, to which Lash refers as constituting forms of 'post-hegemonic power' (Lash, 2007: 58).

Walter Benjamin and Michel de Certeau provide a useful point of departure here. Benjamin's work on the *flâneur* describes an archetypally post-industrial, urban character, strolling the city's streets in a casual manner, passively watching and absorbing the world as it goes by (Benjamin, 2002). De Certeau, working along similar lines, articulates the subjective nature of the individual's experience of urban environments at the street level – specifically in New York – in contrast to those who work and live in modernist skyscrapers, such as the then-new World Trade Center:

An Icarus flying above these waters, [the subject within a skyscraper] can ignore the devices of Daedalus in mobile and endless labyrinths far below. His elevation transfixes him into a voyeur... It transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. ... (In contrast, the ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below,' below the thresholds at which visibility begins.) They walk – an elementary form of the experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'texts' they write without being able to read it.

(de Certeau, 1984: 92-93)

Both Benjamin and de Certeau place an emphasis on the 'illegible or non-rational nature of how subjects encounter the city' as '[s]ubjects engage with and act upon

urban space in ways which do not always lend themselves to narrative or representation' (Tonkiss, 2005: 150). Fran Tonkiss, developing this using a notion from Roland Barthes, argues that 'individuals "speak" the city by moving through it, enunciating a private language of place and practice,' constituting a 'contrast between the official order of the city and people's colloquial use of it' (2005: 138). This contrast is crucial here – the meaning of urban spaces is constituted through the subject's experience of them, which, while obviously shaped by their permanent physical characteristics, owes more to the temporal, experiential 'relationships of sequence, context and differentiation' (Tonkiss, 2005: 136). Understanding the city, then, is a matter of understanding the tension and disjuncture between a Foucauldian conceptualisation of the city as a concrete, coherent and governable space and de Certeau's subjective articulation of it through the 'view from below ... [which] only ever provides partial sightlines and situated knowledge' (Tonkiss, 2005: 148).

Urban spaces are not, though, only sites of subjective individual experience. They provide the context for a great deal of modern social interaction. Georg Simmel argues that every point in a space 'possesses a kind of uniqueness' (Simmel, 1997: 138). This means that, to Simmel, 'the very structuring and arrangement of social life is spatially based' (Škoric, Kišjuhas and Škoric, 2013: 594-595) – that social interaction itself is 'experienced as a realization of space' (Georg Simmel in Škoric, Kišjuhas and Škoric, 2013: 593). At the core of this is the idea of the 'exclusivity' of space – that 'an object is always unique even if it is considered only from the viewpoint of its position on Earth's surface and if all its other dimensions are ignored' (Škoric, Kišjuhas and Škoric, 2013: 590). Implicit here, then, is a certain distance – if two objects cannot, by definition, occupy the same space, then there must at all times be some means by which they can be differentiated spatially. We can argue, then, that this distance is at least partly constitutive of social interaction, as its presence is a defining characteristic of social space. This recalls Henri Lefebvre's argument, paraphrased by Kipfer *et al.*, that, rather than being defined according to physical markers, the urban 'must "live" through social practice' (Kipfer, Saberi and Wieditz 2012: 119) – that '(social) space is a (social) product' (Lefebvre, 1991: 27, parentheses in original). While Lefebvre's argument relates mostly to a neo-Marxist linkage of social differences to the production of economic surplus and the concentration of power, the basic conceptualisation of space as a 'material product of a given social formation' (Gottdiener, 1985: 115) – that is, through social interactions and relations – relates closely to Simmel's. While, as per Foucault, we can understand space

according to its physical boundaries – indeed, Simmel refers to 'social thresholds' as joining and separating discrete social spaces (Škoric, Kišjuhas and Škoric, 2013: 592) – its sense is constructed according to the social interactions that occur within it, and the distances that dictate the nature and form of those interactions. Space has little conceptual importance in the absence of the social practices through which it is constituted and the distances that define them.

Given the increasingly global nature of cities, understanding their function as frontier spaces is increasingly important. Saskia Sassen states that the global city – that is, one with significant transport and trade links to foreign cities – constitute a 'new frontier zone' through which capital, people and goods must travel in order to traverse national borders (Sassen, 2012: 67). Sassen argues that rather than globalisation bringing about a borderless world, it has instead caused borders to shift to cities, whether as international frontiers such as airports, or local ones such as the walls surrounding a gated community (Sassen, 2012: 67). Paul Virilio (1991) writes along similar lines about airports, conceptualising them as spaces of quarantine between the city, or state, and the outside world. Using the language of disease and 'contamination', Virilio posits that in a world made up of networks of cities, linked airport-to-airport, 'the city [is] entered not through a gate nor through an *arc de triomphe*, but rather through an electronic audience system' (Virilio, 1991: 10-11). Building on these conceptualisations, then, we can read the city as constituting a multi-layered system of frontiers and intermediate spaces, not just in and of itself, but also relating to other cities, states and so on.

The modern city is a space of governance and regulation, subjective experience and presence, distance and differentiation; it is a space of frontiers and boundaries; it is a space of layeredness and complexity. It is all of these things, and more, in one measure or another – as the key site of physical social interaction in the contemporary world, it is crucial that we understand this.

Digital Space

Moving from the physical to the digital, or virtual, it will be informative to see some of the connections and inconsistencies between conceptualisations of both. By developing an understanding of why and how the experience of digital environments differs from the physical, and what this means for our theorisation of these virtual spaces, we can more fully develop a conceptual framework through which to analyse Facebook.

Here it is useful to start with a somewhat more philosophical approach, through which we can develop an understanding of the virtual as constituting the digital equivalent of space and distance. Roberto Diodato argues that 'the virtual has the peculiarity of being an intermediate entity between object and event, thing and image' (Diodato, 2012: 101). The virtual itself, whether it is manifested in a computer screen, a digital network, or silver bromide in a roll of photographic film, constitutes a part of a process of mediation of both physical and abstract objects. This understanding leads us to Carlos A. Scolari's articulation of engagement with the digital as a 'hypertextual experience – a sense production and interpretative practice that is part of Web navigation, video gaming, computer-mediated communication, or mobile phone interactions' (Scolari, 2009: 29). According to Scolari, this digital, hypertextual and virtual experience, whether social or otherwise, constitutes a 'simulation of interaction' (Scolari, 2009: 41). In much the same vein as Guy Debord, who believed that 'individual life' and 'real living' are 'deprived of time, excluded from the spectacular time of TV's simulations of experience, and left to wither' (Cubitt, 2001: 14), or Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994), Scolari argues here that digital experience, as a hypertextual phenomenon, is necessarily detached from the 'real'. Thus it follows that we must spatialize the digital realm differently to the physical world – its hypertextual, spectacular and mediating nature implicitly abides by different rules.

Joshua Meyrowitz's work provides a useful point of tension here. Meyrowitz applies a similar theoretical framework to both face-to-face and mediated interactions. Focusing 'only on information access' (Meyrowitz, 1985: 36), he constructs a "model of [social] situations as information-systems" characterised by 'patterns of access to information' where social actors 'can access each other's performances in a shared physical location of environment' (Moore, 2012: 4). Meyrowitz argues that 'it is not the physical setting itself that determines the nature of the interaction, but the patterns of information flow' (Meyrowitz, 1985: 37). This model sees physical and mediated interactions as differing not in their essential form or meaning, but in their setting – 'electronic media are reorganizing the social settings [not the ways] in which people interact' (Moore, 2012: 5). This, he argues, allows us to apply the same analytical techniques to both.

However, this is problematic in a number of ways. First, in contrast to Simmel's idea of the exclusivity of place, which implies that if multiple objects cannot

simultaneously occupy the same place, then one object cannot occupy multiple places, Meyrowitz posits that electronic media facilitate a 'doubling of place' – a 'simultaneous "occupation" of two different yet continuous social spaces' (Moore, 2012: 28). This, in itself, is somewhat incongruous to Meyrowitz's model for analysing social interactions – this doubling-up necessarily changes the nature of mediated communications. Whereas physical interactions can only take place in one setting, mediated interactions can operate in parallel to them, thus adding a layer of complexity to any analysis of the latter and effectively altering the prism through which we can view them. Andreas Wittel's work on network sociality also contradicts Meyrowitz's theoretical framework, arguing that social behaviour is seeing a 'change from pre-given relationships to choice' – a shift from the relatively static social relationships and structures of the pre-network age to a more mobile, 'translocal' and subject-oriented version of sociality (Wittel, 2001: 65). Wittel sees this as a direct outcome of the technologizing of communications and sociality. While this is a somewhat technologically deterministic viewpoint, it is perhaps more useful to read it in the context of Manuel Castells' assertion that 'technology does not determine society ... [t]echnology is society' (Castells, 2010: 5) – the changes in technology and society articulated by Wittel are two sides of the same coin, symbiotic and intertwined elements of the same phenomenon of technologic advancement and social change as brought about by one another.

Given the emphasis on boundaries and frontiers established above by Foucault, Sassen and Simmel, it is informative at this point to address their meaning in the digital age. Indeed, the very definition, form and function of the boundary or frontier have been altered. As argued by Paul Virilio, 'the boundary-surface has recorded innumerable perceptible and imperceptible transformations, of which the latest is probably that of the interface' (Virilio, 1991: 12). That is, not only can there be boundaries separating spaces from one another within the digital medium, but there are boundaries – the screen, operating system, keyboard and so on – separating us from the medium itself. For this Norbert Bolz uses the Greek word 'aisthesis', here meaning a perception with the intellect as well as the senses. Bolz describes the interaction with the digital world through a monitor as 'an *aisthesis* without distance – eye and image collide. *Aisthesis* is no longer the perception of a gaze, but rather the tactile-digital fingering of the monitor' (Bolz, 1999: 115). Distance is effectively eliminated in all but a perceptual, subjective sense. As articulated by Francesco Casetti, screens, the standard visual portal to the online world

are no longer surfaces on which reality is relived, so to speak. Rather, they have become transit hubs for the images that circulate in our social space. They serve to capture these images, to make them momentarily available for somebody somewhere – perhaps even in order to rework them – before they embark again on their journey. Therefore screens function as the junctions of a complex circuit, characterized both by a continuous flow and by localized processes of configuration or reconfiguration of the circulating images.

(Casetti, 2013: 17)

According to Casetti's reading, then, there is a flattening of experience in the digital realm, as information is coded, recoded and decoded before being presented as a set of images and symbols on a two-dimensional screen. This mitigation of the third dimension, while retaining those of visual length and breadth, and that of time, means that any sense of digital space must necessarily rely on abstract, subjective conceptualisations rather than concrete, measurable factors. Space is flattened to almost nothing through its expression via the screen.

It must be noted here that there is a dual meaning to the word 'surface' in this context. It is both a physical phenomenon – on the screen or interface – as well as a virtual object that simultaneously separates and joins different places. Paul Virilio provides us with a useful starting point for understanding this concept:

If space is that which keeps everything from occupying the same place, this abrupt confinement brings absolutely everything precisely to that 'place,' that location that has no location. The exhaustion of physical, or natural, relief and of temporal distances telescopes all localization and all position ... This technological deregulation of various milieus is also topological to the exact extent that ... it inversely and paradoxically builds an imperceptible order, which is invisible but just as practical as masonry or the public highways system.

(Virilio, 1991: 17-19)

The 'abrupt confinement' and apparent a-locality of digital settings means that we cannot spatialize it in the same way as a physical room, or outdoor area. Virilio continues:

From here on, the appearance of surfaces and superficies conceals a secret transparency, a thickness without thickness, a volume without volume, an imperceptible quantity.

(Virilio, 1991: 17)

This is key here – digital space is indeed a 'thickness without thickness, a volume without volume' as it *feels* as though it tangibly distances us from one another, without actually doing so. It is tactile without having physical texture; it seems

enormous despite consisting of little but electrons. The virtual, digital world pervades, surrounds and coats almost everything we do, but we cannot touch it, feel it, or truly see it. It constitutes a new type of surface – one that defies physical definition or equivalence, simultaneously joining and separating everyone and everything that it touches.

The Social Surface

The above discussion informs a conceptualisation of digital space as difficult to define through the language of physical description. More than anything else, it functions as a flexible, hypertextual and multidimensional ‘social surface’, which is not only permeable but also permeates through the entirety of our connected existence. It floats between, and touches, all web users, contingent on presence and interaction on all sides in order to constitute a site of social interaction.

It remains important not to disconnect online interaction from place or space – the space an actor is in will necessarily condition their interactions, both in transmission and reception, no matter how they are mediated. However, the protocological limitations of digital mediation, by their very nature, serve to ‘flatten’ interactions and in the coding and decoding process, and the screening process, remove depth from the interaction (Galloway, 2004; Galloway and Thacker, 2004; Kittler, 2006).

Taking into account this conceptualisation, informed as it is by existing scholarship, this piece of research examines, in light of the apparently a-physical nature of digital interaction, how Facebook users’ conceptualisations of the service, in its function as a site of social interaction, affect our overall conceptualisation of social spaces.

I will investigate this as it relates to the putative ‘social surface’ as articulated above. In doing so I will seek to establish a frame for understanding how the predominantly young, technologically literate sample present in this study conceptualise Facebook as a means for socialising with others.

METHODOLOGY

The research method selected for this dissertation was a combination of mapping exercises and semi-formal interviews conducted one-to-one, in private settings, the data from which was coded and analysed according to principles of thematic analysis.

Selection

Following the lead of Didem Ozkul, whose research on mobile communication practices inspired much of the methodological thinking behind this research, I utilised 'non-representative sampling', which allows for the widest possible 'variation in the respondents' experiences of place, place attachment, and mobility' (Ozkul, 2013). Instead of attempting to achieve a truly representative sample, accounting for ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status, I sought to generate a sample with a breadth of experience. This was, however, biased somewhat toward youth, given the exigencies of both the technology itself, as well as my personal research situation, as a student in an unfamiliar city with restricted access to many older potential respondents. As such, the data set includes eight respondents, of whom six were male, two were female, five were in their 20s, and three were in their 30s.

Data Collection

Mapping exercises

Drawing again on Ozkul's work, the interview sessions began with a mapping exercise, in which the participant was given 10 minutes to draw a 'map of Facebook' on A3 sketch paper, using any or all of four Sharpie brand felt-tip pens, coloured black, green, red and blue. The instructions given were intentionally vague, allowing for as wide a range of interpretations from the respondent as possible. After reading and signing an informed consent form, the interviewee was given a piece of paper bearing the following text, and allowed to draw and write at their own pace:

In the next 10 minutes, using the provided materials, draw a map of Facebook. You can use as much or as little of the page, and as many or few of the pens, as you like. There are no other rules here – you are free to draw your map however, and from whatever angle, you want.

This was intended to generate a similar type of data to that of Ozkul's research, wherein her interview subjects were asked to draw a 'cognitive map' of London, which 'did not need to be geographically accurate, but rather should show London as they experienced it in their

everyday lives', which would give both researcher and interviewee the opportunity to address the deeper meaning of their locative media use in relation to both the physical city as well as their experience and memory of it (Ozkul, 2013). Given the conceptual nature of the field of research addressed herein, this was a useful method as it allowed both the participants and myself to work with a physical, concrete representation of a relatively abstract construct.

Interviews

Following the mapping exercise, the interviews were allowed to develop in something of an organic manner. After a short break, in which I visually assessed the interviewee's map in order to note down interesting features and potential talking points, I began the discussion by asking the respondent to explain, in their own words, what they had drawn. From this, the discussion developed essentially on its own terms, although my questions generally revolved around the 'whys' of the map – for example, 'why did you include this element', 'why did you leave this feature off your map', 'why did you use this colour here', 'why do you link these two features', and so on. Despite this structural flexibility, each interview finished with the same question: 'following our discussion today, would you change anything about the map you have drawn?' This provided the opportunity for the respondent to draw together the myriad threads of discussion and complete their own analysis of the site, thus providing at least a nominal 'centre' to the interview as a data set.

In the questions asked, I followed the precedent set by Per Gustafson in his research on the links between mobility and place attachment, albeit in a less structured manner, wherein he uses his interviews to focus on 'how the respondents talked about place, how they attributed meaning to a place, and in what ways they considered place to be important' (Gustafson, 2001: 671). Similarly, the key to this research was to hear the full range of a given respondent's expression in relation to Facebook.

The full Interview Guide can be found in the Appendix.

Data Analysis

The coding and analysis process used herein was drawn from Braun and Clarke's (2006) work on thematic analysis in psychology. As such, it was broken down and articulated according to their six-stage process of coding, analysis and production of the report (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 92-99), as articulated in the table below. The inductive nature of this method suited the data set well, due to its size, depth and breath, as well as its necessarily

subjective and interpretive characteristics. Because the distinctive features of each interviewee's responses and maps lie in their relatively subtle nuances, the process of 'getting to know' the data became crucial to the quality of the subsequent analysis.

Table 1: Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 1: Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 92)

Coding process

As per Braun and Clarke, the first phase of the coding process consisted of a manual process of reading, re-reading, annotating and note-taking around the transcripts, resulting in a rough, 'brainstorm'-style picture of how the various codes could potentially fit together. I then moved the transcripts and scanned files into the NVivo 10 quantitative data analysis software running on an Apple MacBook Pro laptop, to digitise the coding process. During the course of a number of readings and re-readings of the interviews, completed in conjunction with close readings of the relevant maps drawn by the participants, a clear coding framework emerged, as seen in Table 2 below. Given that the focus of the study is the specialisation or otherwise of Facebook, as it constitutes a site of social interaction, the codes generated refer to themes surrounding the shape and form of the site, as they appear within the interviews. Table 2 shows the codes used, and what themes they relate to.

Theme	Code
Connection	Social relations
	Networks
	Information flows/transferral
Abstraction	Visualisation
	Real-world examples/equivalences
	Virtualisation
	Self and other
Flatness	Images
	Text
	Screens
	Limitations
Multidimensionality	Depth
	Spatialisation
	Time
	Movement
	Relative location
Presence/Continuousness	Visibility
	Awareness
	Availability
	Compulsion

Table 2: Coding frame for evidence of spatialisation, or otherwise, of Facebook by interview participants

Analytical process

Once coding was completed, the data was analysed through the thematic frame established, referring back to both the previous reading conducted in preparation for the study, as well as the loose conceptual framework established before the interviews were conducted. Efforts were made to ensure that this remained true to the initial research aim of conceptualising the way Facebook users understand the site. In particular, I searched for disjunctures, firstly, between each interviewee's transcript and the map they had drawn, and, secondly, by comparing the interviewees' transcripts to one another, and, finally, by searching for inconsistencies in the data as a whole. By searching for both unifying themes and points of disagreement, I was able to assess and answer the research question as it relates to the relatively limited data set addressed herein. Equally importantly, this analytical method allowed me to test the essential strengths and weaknesses of my conceptual framework, thus potentially providing impetus for future research along similar, albeit more developed, lines.

Ethics

As per the requirements of the London School of Economics and Political Science, an ethics proposal was submitted, and accepted, for this research. Aside from gender and approximate

age, no personal data from any of the respondents was used, and pseudonyms have been provided for each. All respondents read and signed a form detailing the processes and requirements of the research project.

RESULTS

This chapter will comprise both examples of, and some analysis of, the ways the interview candidates interacted with the themes established in the previous chapter. While this is necessarily not exhaustive – any attempt to include and analyse every example present in the data would be impractical and rife with redundancies – it does provide the opportunity to engage with the most important points addressed in the interviews. As per the coding framework, this section has been split according to the themes raised: connection, abstraction, flatness, depth and presence/continuousness.

Connection

At the heart of how the respondents understood Facebook were ideas of connection, networking and information transfer. This sense of social linkage was apparent in every interview. The following quotations demonstrate some of the ways the candidates expressed this.

It's all interconnected, which is the main thing I was trying to highlight. In terms of the Facebook layout – and in my little mind-map it looks kind of different – I think the interconnectedness is what I was trying to achieve in the map.

Candidate 1

Because Facebook is a very complex, multifaceted tool, it would be very hard to express it in a linear format. It needs to have, well... It makes it a lot easier to express these facets and how they interlink with each other in a mind-map format, rather than, you know, a linear thought train, because you would have to link back so much that it would maybe become messy in an actual, physical, graphical way. To say it verbally would be confusing as well. I suppose that's why I chose the mind map.

Candidate 2

This idea of interconnection is important to understanding how the respondent approached Facebook. Rather than seeing the site as one homogenous mass, or, conversely, as an array of discrete parts, it is a fluid mass of internal links and connections. This complexity, and the difficulty in precisely mapping it out, was a feature of a number of the interviews. Candidates 1, 2, 3 and 4 chose to use a mind-map or 'brainstorm' format in their drawing exercises, while Candidates 5, 6 and 8 drew more literal pictures of the Facebook News Feed, or other pages, and Candidate 7 favoured a list of the site's 'pros' and 'cons'. This variation at least partly

indicates the difficulty in articulating the workings of the platform, and how it impacts upon the respondents' lives.

There is some important information like articles from newspapers abroad, that maybe you wouldn't have any access to if your friends don't post it. I'll give you an example - my friends in Peru, where I was living for a few years, I have a couple of friends. They normally post articles from the local newspapers, and I'm really happy to read them every time, because they keep me updated about what's going on.

Candidate 6

Many will argue that it'll make you much more alienated, isolated from the real world, but I feel like, if anything, it connects me more.

Candidate 3

Here we see the site not only as a system of internal connections, but also as a means by which its users can maintain their own links to the social world or worlds that they inhabit, independent of physical location. This virtualisation of social relationships and connections is a consistent theme throughout most of the interviews. The use of the site to 'stay in touch' or 'keep in touch' with friends, news and other content is of significant interest here, particularly given that these phrases, or variations upon them, were used by all but two of the interviewees: Candidates 6 and 7. The phrases convey a sense of virtual tactility and closeness, in spite of the physical absence implicit in Facebook interactions. This sense of abstraction will be explored further in the following sections.

Abstraction

Most of the respondents referred to somewhat abstract relationships between their 'real' self, and their online self, and the worlds those respective selves inhabit. This served to create a sense of apparent disconnect between their self-perceptions in offline and online contexts. We can see this in the difficulty Candidate 3 experienced in trying to describe the difference between the 'real world' and the Facebook world.

The real world... Did I say that? (laughs) The real world - the world without communication (laughs). No... I guess... Life off of Facebook, and off of the online world. Face-to-face interaction. Communication. Meeting in real spaces, such as a cafeteria or a restaurant (laughs).

Candidate 3

This use of 'real' here caused problems for the interviewee, as she attempted to reconcile the two spaces she inhabits, and the differences in how she thinks of them. There is an implicit value attached to being in the same physical space as the person or people with whom she is

interacting – a sense that offline interactions are somehow more ‘real’, or better, than those that take place online. This view was articulated in similar terms by Candidates 1, 6, 7 and 8, each of whom expressed some misgivings about the quality of social interaction available through Facebook.

Similarly, a consistent theme among most of the respondents was an apparent disjuncture between Facebook users’ offline and online personalities. Candidate 4 expressed it thus:

There’s a me, yeah, on the screen. ... Well, there's the me that goes around, walking around, walking to school, buying sandwiches from real people. And then there's the me in front of the screen, that is producing something for Facebook. So I'm sitting there at a keyboard and *I'm creating the me on Facebook*, and that's the relationship ... There's me and then there's the Facebook me, and those two things are in relationship to each other, though mostly I'm creating the Facebook me, more so than being - hopefully - created by the Facebook me.

Candidate 4 (emphasis added)

Candidate 1 articulated similar thoughts, albeit in reference to other users, rather than himself.

I do feel like people can use it – I’m going to sound really cynical about this – can use it for their own benefit. And what I mean by that is that they can actually be whoever they want to be online, rather than who they actually are. ... It’s almost like online’s good, but to establish a real relationship, with friends or family or whatever you are, it should be face to face, because, I guess, online you can’t really project that kind of emotional connection, with somebody else.

Candidate 1

Here both respondents saw users as producing an avatar of sorts on the screen – in engaging with others through the site, they are effectively constructing a character, rooted in their ‘real’ self, for other users to engage with through their own respective characters. In establishing layers of disconnection between the user, their apparent personality, and then how they are perceived, the medium provides the capacity for these users to construct an abstract, digital self, through which they can address their Facebook world.

Flatness

The difference between the ‘real’ world and Facebook generally manifested in respondents constructing their experience of Facebook as, in a sense, ‘flat’. The two-dimensional physical manifestations of the site – its presence on screens, and the predominance of text and still images within it, being key amongst these – informed several of the interviewees’ descriptions of it:

Yeah, I'm more likely to just flick through (mimes scrolling on a smartphone), and not really look unless something interests me. And then I'm like, 'Oh they've put up photos from half an hour ago,' wherever they were or whatever they were doing, you know?

Candidate 8

Because it's text, isn't it? So you can put something out and then refine it and change it and check it with people. Whereas when you're offline, you just are. ... I think every decision you make on Facebook, at the back of your head, you're like, 'How is this going to make me look?'

Candidate 7

I think the visual aesthetic, and just the general way that 5 second look at a profile will tell you more about a person. I think you'll find, I'm sure, almost everybody, if they look at somebody's profile, will just scroll through the profile pictures.

Candidate 5

These excerpts neatly illustrate the flattening of information and interactions within Facebook, due largely to the limitations of the medium. The information displayed and consumed often only appears briefly and in a transient manner – this is particularly visible in Candidate 8's use of the phrase 'flick through', allied to her miming of the action of 'flicking' past posts on a smartphone. This reference to her scanning through the mobile application for things that may interest her, while those that do not register only briefly, highlights the sense of transience and two-dimensionality in her use of the service. Her use of the application is shaped by the fundamental limitations of the smartphone screen as an interface, as she 'swipes' almost flippantly past extraneous or uninteresting information.

Multidimensionality

In addition to the flat renderings of the site, many of the respondents' descriptions of the structure or shape of the site itself went well beyond two dimensions. At this point we begin to see both literal and virtual spatialisations of the site:

It's like a store on the High Street. You can go to Facebook. If you want to post your pictures and you want your pictures to be seen by everyone, you can go to that store and place them there. So for me, Facebook is like a massive chain of – let's call it like a warehouse, where you can deposit all your memories, or where you can receive, as well, your letters as a post office. Because Facebook is not only a warehouse where you go to store your pictures, but also you can pick up your mail. So for me it's like a big, massive warehouse, where you can get all these services at once, in one place.

Candidate 6

Have you seen that advert, and it's like that massive dough blob, and it's getting huge, and it's swallowing... It's a big doughy blob, and it goes in the centre of this town, and it stretches out, it absorbs everything. I think it's like that - it's this massive amalgamation. It's like putty, and it's just going everywhere. It's going to just spread. As more and more cultures

are Facebook proficient, this big blue blob is just surrounding everything. Everything gets sucked into it, like blubber or something like that. Kind of like lava or something...

Candidate 7

My friends are here. They're an audience only in the sense that they're grouped together and I am sort of the centre of that stage. But they're also all doing their own things. Like, they're all on stages and I get to wander around and see what everyone's doing simultaneously, which is a different relationship, I think. So the metaphor of being on a stage and sort of shouting is there, but it's more I'm getting on stage and saying 'ask me questions', or asking people to come up on stage, in a sense. Though of course I'm not asking anyone to do anything - they're all volunteering to do it. ... [They're like] a sort of satellite system feeding into my Wall.

Candidate 4

These descriptions share several common factors. First, they all portray the site in physical language – there is a unifying theme of size, form and movement. Second, they convey a sense of users occupying positions relative to one another, and relative to that of the information held within the site. Third, each description conveys the idea of a system in flux, constantly shifting and evolving as time goes on and the elements within it move one way or another.

The differences lie in how each interviewee saw the user's position and agency, relative to Facebook. For Candidate 6, who elsewhere in his interview spoke of his limited use of the service, it is a place where he can go, which stores photos and other information for him to share or return to later. Candidate 7, who was engaged with but wary of the site, instead pointed to its all-consuming nature, which to him manifests in it absorbing every aspect of its users' lives, thus reducing its users' capacity for agency. Candidate 4, who was the most immersed Facebook user of this group, described it instead almost as a system of essentially equal actors, each able to project, absorb and interact with information on a relatively level plane. These three descriptions illustrate one of the fundamental tensions inherent to Facebook use, particularly in the age of the smartphone: the extent to which we can exert agency over our digital lives and draw a distinction between our sense of self in online and offline contexts.

Presence/Continuousness

A consistent theme through each interview was Facebook's ubiquity in its users' lives. Its conscious or unconscious presence was a concern, in varying ways, for each of the respondents. Candidate 2 describes one aspect of this omnipresence thus:

Facebook has spread into basically every nook and cranny of the Internet. You know, if I'm logging onto - I don't even know, what I use that it does it on - 8tracks... When I log into

8tracks to listen to music, I can click the 'log in with Facebook', and it's interesting, because I don't think anybody would do that unless it was a one-click login.

Candidate 2

Among the myriad services available online, Facebook constitutes a common thread. Here the respondent described a function provided by Facebook to other websites, which allows new users to easily register using the information they have already added to their Facebook profiles. This, much like the 'share' or 'like' buttons placed at the bottom of news articles, blog posts and so on, gives Facebook some presence on a large number of web pages, in every 'nook and cranny of the Internet'. To Candidate 2, then, as someone browsing the Internet, Facebook is effectively inescapable – it is everywhere.

However, this sense of ubiquity extends well beyond web browsers. Candidates 1, 3, 5 and 7 each described its apparently inescapable presence in their day-to-day lives:

Where is Facebook? Facebook's everywhere.

Candidate 3

In a digital age it's become accessible from everywhere. You know, it's on your mind, it's in your hand, it's a constant flow of information.

Candidate 5

It's a place where you can go, where you don't feel like you're alone, because you know there's activity going on, whether it's with people that you know or secondary connections. I think now, especially, it's always going to be in the back of our minds.

Candidate 1

The common theme of these quotations – the sense of constant availability and presence – is telling. To these respondents, who were among the more immersed in the Facebook universe, there is little escaping the service. It is more than just a communications tool, as it was described by Candidate 6 – it is a seemingly concrete, permanent aspect of their social lives. Candidate 7 articulated this neatly:

I do think it's kind of in our psyche as well. It's in our thoughts, it's in our brains, it's in our everyday thoughts, it's in our everyday thought processes. ... I think Facebook is like – obviously, technically, it's on the Internet – but I think it's like a social – *it's like fashion. You know, where's fashion?*

Candidate 7 (emphasis added)

This last phrase is crucial here. To these respondents – Candidate 7 in an explicit sense, and the others more implicitly – Facebook is not just a medium of communication; it is a social construct in its own right. This is enabled by its technological reach – not only do relatively

static desktop or laptop computers provide a portal to the site, but any person with a smartphone can access Facebook in the time it takes to remove the phone from their pocket. Candidate 4 described this phenomenon using metaphors from film and television:

I watched that movie *Her* yesterday, so I hope this isn't too strange of a reference, but in that movie I was struck by how the computer, Samantha, was just everywhere. And I see that as happening, like with my phone, Facebook is there, if I'm on the computer in the library, Facebook is there, if I'm at home, Facebook is there, and it's the same Facebook. ... I feel like Facebook is just in everything. So I feel like Facebook is just, sort of – I don't want to say everywhere, because that implies that I can't escape from it if I wanted to. I do still feel like I could escape from it, which might be naive, or the same - it might be sane to think that I can turn Facebook off. But I do think that it's accessible from anywhere, so it sort of has to be everywhere. But I guess ... it's like a portable hole, like ... the Road Runner has a little portable hole that he can use, and he can jump into it to get away from the Coyote. And I see Facebook as the same way. I can whip out my iPhone, and it's this little portable hole, and if I'm on a bus and bored, I have social interaction. If I don't want to look like I don't have friends, I can go 'Oh, well I'm looking at Facebook', so it's like a little portable hole I can get into to get away from the Wile E. Coyote of loneliness and fright, I guess.

Candidate 4

The 'portable hole' described here provides a neat metaphor to describe this sense of ubiquity. Not only is Facebook constantly available to the interviewee, this availability lets its users effectively escape the physical spaces in which they find themselves. As will become clear, this characteristic is key to our understanding of these mobile capabilities' importance.

DISCUSSION

The people interviewed for this study addressed Facebook from a broad range of perspectives. Some were more immersed in the network than others, and uses for it varied somewhat. However, there were a number of elements to the discussions that we can use in this chapter to realise more fully the idea of the social surface. Here I will first address the strengths of the conceptualisation, as reflected in the interviews, and then discuss its potential pitfalls or weaknesses. While for fluency's sake there are a number of absolute terms used in the following subsections, it is important to remain mindful that this research effectively constitutes a pilot study, due to the small sample of interviewees used, and thus can only provide a general guide for how we may conceptualise this site of social interaction.

Facebook as a social surface

The social surface has three key characteristics. First, it is 'flat', not only in the sense that it is rendered in two dimensions, but in the way we interact with it. Secondly, it is made up of a

dense net of interconnections. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it is a continuous presence in the lives of its inhabitants.

Flatness

Facebook constitutes a flattening of social interaction in both a literal and an abstract sense. The former occurs in users' interactions with the interface itself – as articulated by Candidate 4; the service is interacted with through a screen. This, allied to Candidate 7's reference to the text- and image-based nature of the site, particularly as it is illustrated by Candidate 8's habit of 'flick[ing] through' the News Feed on her smartphone, demonstrates the apparent absence of depth in its interfaces. Superficially, this recalls Casetti's putative flattening of social experience in the digital realm (Casetti, 2013: 17). The inevitable and necessary protocological limitations placed upon the available modes of communication through the service in turn limit the range of expression possible for users – while text-based statuses, Wall posts and Chat messages, images, videos and so on provide a range of options for expression, each is fundamentally constrained by the medium itself. At the core of this is the screen – the common interface across both the web and mobile versions of Facebook – which effectively functions as a surface through, or on, which the site can be touched. Bolz's reference to 'an *aisthesis* without distance [where] eye and image collide ... [in a] tactile-digital fingering of the monitor' (Bolz, 1999: 115) is relevant here, as we see the reduction of the distance between the user and the content of the site to that between him or her and the screen. The interface functions as a two-dimensional, tactile surface – Virilio's 'boundary-surface' (Virilio, 1991: 12) – that simultaneously separates the user from, and connects them to, the people and information with which they interact.

Here we see perhaps the first significant characteristic of the digital social arena as a social surface. In the site of social interaction being constituted physically on a two-dimensional plane, the apparatus of the site – both physical and virtual – takes on the form of an 'intermediate entity', to use Diodato's phrase (Diodato, 2012: 101), between user and user, user and information, or user and site. This echoes Scolari's idea of the 'simulation of interaction' (Scolari, 2009: 41), not in the sense of Baudrillard's simulacra, but as in Bolz's notion of *aisthesis*. The Facebook interface constitutes a simultaneous elimination of distance between users and construction of a protocological wall separating them, which functions as a tactile, albeit limited, site of social interaction.

Interconnection

The second key thread of this discussion lies in the dense web of connections that make up Facebook. The interviewees described three ways that this is constituted. Candidates 1 and 2 discussed the interlinked nature of the site itself, in its structure and use; Candidates 2, 4, 6 and 8 spoke of how it connects them to media content and other information; and each of the respondents except Candidates 6 and 7 made some reference to the social or interpersonal links it helps them maintain. These three manifestations of the interconnected nature of the service illustrate its complex nature, and the difficulty in describing it adequately. In short, Facebook's hyper-connectedness means that it cannot be conceptualised using the language of the physical world. Rather, it is more useful to conceptualise this aspect of it through the prism of the 'hypertextual experience' discussed by Scolari – the 'sense production and interpretative practice that is part of Web navigation, video gaming, computer-mediated communication, or mobile phone interactions' (Scolari, 2009: 29). Here there is a sense of the supra-physical to the dense mesh of connection. As discussed in the previous subsection, Facebook-based socialisation constitutes an elimination of distance, not so much the physical sense of making-things-seem-closer, but in its near-complete absence as a factor affecting a given interaction.

It is crucial to understand this as a significant departure from previous forms of spatially-defined social interaction, as typified by that of Simmel, wherein distance – whether due to its size or its paucity – is necessarily a contributing factor (Škoric, Kišjuhas and Škoric, 2013: 590). This external and internal, or meta-, connection is a peculiarly digital thing – it is created by the near-instantaneous and virtual nature of digital media, which in turn enhances the tactility of Facebook as a surface. In using a medium constructed of dense webs of interconnection, the Facebook user finds him- or herself essentially able to touch the farthest reaches of the site through those connections, in the absence of the friction inherent to physical distance. Here it is useful to return to Virilio's idea of 'abrupt confinement' – the infrastructure of Facebook 'brings absolutely everything precisely to that "place," that location that has no location' (Virilio, 1991: 17-19).

Continuous presence

The final key characteristic of Facebook as a social surface lies in its ubiquity in its users' lives. Here there was some inconsistency between interviewees – some, most notably Candidates 5, 7 and 8, spoke of having made conscious decisions to limit its direct impact on their social lives, while the others experienced varying degrees of immersion in the service. However, even the relatively casual users of the site, such as Candidates 1 and 3, noted that,

in 3's words, it is effectively 'everywhere'. The most apt articulation of this comes directly from Candidate 4 in his reference to the movie *Her* and the cartoon character, the Road Runner. His idea of Facebook as a 'portable hole' stored in one's pocket or bag provides a remarkably appropriate metaphor for the omnipresent and continuous nature of the service. This moves beyond most previous conceptualisations of the sites of social interaction – where previously most were static or at best unwieldy, now there are few barriers to total connectivity, regardless of location or physical circumstance. Virilio makes reference to the city as entered through 'an electronic audience system' (Virilio, 1991: 11), but in this we see something more of an entire world, to be reached through a mobile, digital window. For those with smartphones, the service never leaves them. Indeed, even for those who do not access it through their phones, as in Candidate 7, it is ever-present in many of its users' minds.

Pitfalls

As was alluded to in the previous subsection, this study did uncover one major weakness, if not flaw, in the social surface as a conceptualisation of Facebook as a site of social interaction. Its appropriateness within the sample interviewed appears to depend largely on the individual's immersion in the service – that is, how much they use it, whether they use it in a mobile setting, and how committed they are to limiting its interference in their lives. Indeed, Candidate 4, who was perhaps the most involved of everyone in the sample, stated, 'I do still feel like I could escape from it.' As long as this separation, whether real or imagined, is a characteristic of a given user's experience of the service, it will be difficult to apply the social surface as a perfect model for its function as a site of social interaction.

In addition to this, the sample size given is clearly not large enough for us to be able to generalise our findings to all Facebook users. Rather, this is, at best, an indicator of what may be found in future, more wide-ranging studies.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings

Facebook, as one of the major sites of social interaction in the contemporary world, is a complex and multifaceted locus for study. It defies any comprehension consistent with 20th

century spatial or urban theory, instead functioning according to rules that, although they certainly owe much to those theories, are rather different. It follows, then, that a reconceptualization of how sites of social interaction function in the digital world may be necessary.

During the course of this research I found that the model provided by the 'social surface' was at least a viable framework through which to conceptualise Facebook. While clearly the sample of eight interviewees is too small to allow for this model to be generalised, these preliminary findings certainly do not undermine its potential utility.

The social surface has three key aspects. First, we see its flat nature, manifested in the two-dimensional, near-tactile surface of the screen, which simultaneously separates and joins users, information and the service. Secondly, we have the hypertextual, dense web of instantaneous interconnection, which does not so much mitigate distance as render it irrelevant as a factor in social behaviour. Finally, we see Facebook's continuous and ubiquitous nature, manifested in the 'portable hole' of the omnipresent smartphone, which one can 'dive into' at will. Here it is informative to return to Virilio's conceptualisation of 'surfaces and superficies', that are made up of 'a secret transparency, a thickness without thickness, a volume without volume, an imperceptible quantity' (Virilio, 1991: 17). Facebook's nature as a social site lies in this idea – it can be seen as a cloak of dense connections that covers and coats its users.

This conceptualisation is, of course, an abstraction. In a real-world sense, there will inevitably be inconsistencies from one person to another. However, as a general framework for understanding the nature of immersed, mobile, social network-based communication, it appears to be a useful start in moving beyond spatialized understandings of social interaction. Indeed, it is most important that this process of development continues, particularly as ever more social interaction moves online – as communication practices change, so too must communication theory and research.

Further research

From this piece, there are two main threads for future research to take up. First is the idea that the study of social space must be developed moving into the digital age. While there is clearly evidence to suggest that the social surface is a viable framework for understanding digital sites of social interaction, any more concrete claims about it would certainly require a

base of more wide-ranging research. Indeed, competing models should be developed and compared to this and others. Secondly, similar creative research methods could be adopted, not only in the study of social spaces, but in a wide variety of other areas of sociological research. While more traditional types of research retain their utility, researchers should continue to experiment and think laterally in approaching their work, so that the social sciences may continue to evolve and remain relevant. Technological development and redundancy dictates that researchers' work must forever be increasing in efficiency, particularly as it loses grip on old certainties.

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APPENDIX – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part 1: Mind-mapping – 10 minutes

Mind-map exercise instructions:

- In the next 10 minutes, using the provided materials, draw a map of Facebook. You can use as much or as little of the page, and as many or few of the pens, as you like. There are no other rules here – you are free to draw your map however, and from whatever angle, you want.
- Materials: 1 piece of A3 paper, coloured felt-tip pens

Part 2: Reflection – 30-60 minutes

Question guide (General – can be departed from):

- **FIRST QUESTION:** In your own words, explain what you've drawn.
- Types of question to ask:
 - Why this shape/colour/space?
 - Why this size? (How is the page used?)
 - Why here?
 - Why is X included?
 - Why is Y not included?
- **LAST QUESTIONS:**
 - Where is Facebook?
 - What shape is Facebook?
 - Having had this conversation, would you change anything about the map you've drawn? What?

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