

1 Theorising Social Media, Politics and the State

An Introduction

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a basic framework for the analysis of social media, politics and the state. This topic—which the authors in this collected volume study—can be situated in the broader field of Internet and social media studies (see Dutton 2013, as well as the contributions in Ess and Dutton 2013 for an overview). Internet and social media research can be conducted in different ways. More administrative approaches analyse how digital media are used by whom, for what purpose, addressed to which audience, bearing which content, and having which effects. In contrast, critical Internet studies go beyond the digital version of the Lasswell formula. They do not exclude studying empirically the cornerstones of digital media use, but always situate such analyses in theorising and analysing larger contexts, such as power structures, the state, capitalism, gender relations, social struggles, and ideologies, which shape and are shaped by the digital media landscape in dialectical processes (Fuchs 2008, 2014d). This collected volume, in studying social media in the context of politics and the state, suggests the approach of critical Internet and social media studies. (See also Fuchs and Dyer-Witheford 2013; Fuchs and Sandoval 2014.)

This chapter is structured the following way: section two considers what is social media, with a specific emphasis on what makes social media ‘social.’ Section three considers a theoretical framework to understand modern society. Following this, section four considers the nature of social media activity in relation to modern society. Section five proposes a theoretically grounded understanding of the state, while section six considers the various branches that make up the state. Section seven focuses on politics, as well as the relation between the state and politics. Section eight addresses power, specifically state power and corporate power. Section nine considers crime and policing, with an emphasis on the relation of police to the state. Section ten considers the distinctions between protests, revolutions and riots. Finally, section eleven offers some concluding remarks.

2. WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

It is possible to trace the emergence of social media to when Tim O'Reilly (2005) introduced the term 'Web 2.0' in 2005. While O'Reilly claims that 'Web 2.0' denotes actual changes whereby users' collective intelligence co-create the value of platforms like Google, Amazon, Wikipedia or Craigslist in a "community of connected users," (O'Reilly and Battelle 2009, 1) he admits that the term was mainly created for identifying the need of new economic strategies of Internet companies after the 'dot-com' crisis, in which the bursting of financial bubbles caused the collapse of many Internet companies. So he states in a paper published five years after the creation of the invention of the term 'Web 2.0' that this category was "a statement about the second coming of the web after the dotcom bust" at a conference that was "designed to restore confidence in an industry that had lost its way after the dotcom bust" (ibid.).

Michael Mandiberg argues that the notion of 'social media' has been associated with multiple concepts: "the corporate media favourite 'user-generated content,' Henry Jenkins' media-industries-focused 'convergence culture,' Jay Rosen's 'the people formerly known as the audience,' the politically infused 'participatory media,' Yochai Benkler's process-oriented 'peer-production,' and Tim O'Reilly's computer-programming-oriented 'Web 2.0'" (Mandiberg 2012, 2). The question of if and how social the web is or has become depends on a profoundly social theoretical question: what does it mean to be social? Are human beings always social or only if they interact with others? In sociological theory, there are different concepts of the social, such as Émile Durkheim's social facts, Max Weber's social action, Karl Marx's notion of collaborative work (also employed in the concept of computer-supported collaborative work—CSCW) or Ferdinand Tönnies' notion of community (for a detailed discussion, see Fuchs 2014d). Depending on which concept of sociality one employs, one gets different answers to the questions of whether the web is social and whether sociality is a new quality of the web. Community aspects of the web have certainly not started with Facebook, which was founded in 2004 but was already described as characteristic of 1980s bulletin board systems, like The WELL, that he characterises as virtual communities (Rheingold 2000). Collaborative work, as, for example, the cooperative editing of articles performed on Wikipedia, is rather new as a dominant phenomenon on the WWW, but not new in computing. The concept of CSCW (computer supported cooperative work) was subject of a conference series that started in December 1986 with the 1st ACM Conference on CSCW in Austin, Texas. A theoretical approach is needed that identifies multiple dimensions of sociality (such as cognition, communication, and cooperation), based on which the continuities and discontinuities of the development of the Internet can be empirically studied. Neither is the wiki-concept new itself: the WikiWikiWeb was introduced by Ward Cunningham in 1984.

All computing systems, and therefore all web applications, and also all forms of media can be considered as social because they store and transmit human knowledge that originates in social relations in society. They are objectifications of society and human social relations. Whenever a human uses a computing system or a medium (also if she or he is alone in a room), then she or he cognises based on objectified knowledge that is the outcome of social relations. But not all computing systems and web applications support direct communication between humans, in which at least two humans mutually exchange symbols that are interpreted as being meaningful. Amazon mainly provides information about books and other goods one can buy; it is not primarily a tool of communication, but rather a tool of information, whereas Facebook has in-built communication features that are frequently used (mail system, walls for comments, forums, etc.).

The discussion shows that it is not a simple question to decide if and how social the WWW actually is. Therefore a social theory approach of clarifying the notion of ‘social media’ can be advanced by identifying three social information processes that constitute three forms of sociality:

- Cognition
- Communication
- Cooperation

According to this view, individuals have certain cognitive features that they use to interact with others so that shared spaces of interaction are created. In some cases, these spaces are used not just for communication but also for the co-production of novel qualities of overall social systems and for community building. The three notions relate to different forms of sociality: the notion of cognition is related to Emile Durkheim’s concept of social facts, the communication concept to Max Weber’s notions of social actions and social relations, the cooperation concept to the notions of communities and collaborative work. According to this model, media and online platforms that primarily support cognition (such as the websites of newspapers) are social media (1), those that primarily support communication (such as e-mail) are social media (2), and those that primarily support community building and collaborative work (such as Wikipedia, Facebook) are social media (3). This means that social media is a complex term and that there are different types of social media. Empirical studies show that the most recent development is that there is a certain increase of the importance of social media (3) on the Internet, which is especially due to the rise of social networking sites such as Facebook, wikis like Wikipedia, and microblogs such as Twitter and Weibo.

boyd and Ellison (2008, 211) define social network sites as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections

and those made by others within the system.” In network analysis, a network is defined as a system of interconnected nodes (Wasserman and Faust 1997; Barabási 2003). Therefore, based on a strict theoretical understanding, all networked tools that allow establishing connections between at least two humans have to be understood as social network platforms. This includes not only the platforms that boyd and Ellison have in mind but also chats, discussion boards, mailing lists, e-mail, etc.—all Web 2.0 and 3.0 technologies. ‘Social network site’ is therefore an imprecise term. David Beer argues that this definition is too broad and does not distinguish different types of sites such as wikis, folksonomies, mash-ups and social networking sites: “My argument here is simply that we should be moving toward more differentiated classifications of the new online cultures not away from them” (Beer 2008, 519.). He suggests using Web 2.0, not SNS, as an umbrella term.

What makes sites like Facebook distinct is that they are integrated platforms that combine many media and information and communication technologies, such as webpage, webmail, digital image, digital video, discussion group, guest book, connection list or search engine. Many of these technologies are social network tools themselves. It surely is feasible, as boyd and Ellison argue, that profiles, connection lists and tools for establishing connections are the central elements, but missing is the insight that these technologies are meta-communication technologies, technologies of communication technologies. It is therefore more appropriate to speak of social networking sites (SNS) that function as integrated tools of cognition, communication and cooperation. SNS are web-based platforms that integrate different media, information and communication technologies and that allow at least the generation of profiles that display information that describes the users, the display of connections (connection list), the establishment of connections between users that are displayed on their connection lists and the communication between users. SNS are just like all computer technologies cognitive systems because they reflect and display dominant collective values of society that become objectified and confront users. They are communication technologies because they are used for communication and establishing connections in the form of connection lists. SNS are cooperative technologies because they allow the establishment of new friendships and communities and the maintenance of existing friendships. By friendship we mean a continuous social relationship between humans that is based on empathy and sympathy. Therefore SNS provide means for establishing virtual communities understood as “social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationship in cyberspace” (Rheingold 2000). For Rheingold a virtual community is not the same as computer-mediated communication (CMC), but continuous CMC that results in feelings of affiliation.

Not all social relations established or maintained on SNS are forms of community. There might be superficial relations that just exist by a display of connection in the connection list. This can be the case, for example, if one adds friends of friends whom one has never met and with whom one does not continuously interact, if one adds people arbitrarily in order to increase one's friends list, or if one adds people who share one's interests, but with whom one also does not communicate. In this case, the usage of SNS remains on the communication level. Cooperation technologies in the sense of a virtual community are then a mere unrealized potential. It is likely that any concrete SNS will consist of many loose connections and many virtual communities that exist in parallel. SNS on the technological level provide potentials for communication and cooperation. Only the communicative level is automatically realized by establishing connections; the emergence of communities on SNS requires more sustained communicative work so that social bonds emerge. Feelings of community can either emerge on SNS or be imported from the outside world. If individuals make use of SNS for staying in touch with already established friends and contacts more easily and over distance, then existing communities or parts of them are transformed into virtual communities that crystallise on SNS. If individuals make new social bonds with people whom they did not know in advance and whom they have met on SNS, then community emerges inherently from SNS. One can speak of a virtual community in both cases. Cooperation technologies are (besides collaborative online labour, which can be found in the case of wikis, but is not a necessary condition) about the production of social bonds and feelings of belonging and togetherness.

'Social media' such as Facebook support cognition, communication/networking and cooperation (communities, collaborative work, sharing of user-generated and other content). Therefore a lot of personal and social data about users is generated. The question of broader social phenomena on social media, such as politics, protest, crime and revolutions, rests on an understanding of these concepts, as well as an understanding of their relation to modern society. These are considered ahead.

3. WHAT IS MODERN SOCIETY?

Modern society is based on the differentiation of social roles. In modern society, human beings act in different capacities in different social roles. Consider the example of a modern middle-class office worker, who also has roles as a husband, father, lover, friend, voter, citizen, child, fan and neighbour, to say nothing of the various associations to which he may belong. In these different roles, humans are expected to behave according to specific rules that govern the various social systems of which modern society is composed (such as the company, the schools, the family, the church, fan clubs, political parties, etc.).

Jürgen Habermas (1987, 1989) describes how modern society is grounded in different spheres, in which humans act in different roles. He says that modernity resulted in:

1. The separation of the economy from the family and the household so that the modern economy (based on wage labour and capital) emerged.
2. The rise of a political public sphere, in which humans act as citizens, vote, hold a political opinion, etc., in contrast to the earlier monarchic system, in which political power was controlled by the monarch, aristocracy and the church. This includes the shift of the economy towards a capitalist economy grounded in private ownership of the means of production and in the logic of capital accumulation. The economy started to no longer be part of private households, but became organized with the help of large commodity markets that go beyond single households. The modern economy has become “a private sphere of society that [. . .] [is] publicly relevant” (Habermas 1989, 19). The family started to no longer be primarily an economic sphere, but the sphere of intimacy and the household economy based on reproductive labour. Connected to this was the separation of the private and the public sphere that is based on humans acting in different roles (*ibid.*, 152, 154; see also Arendt 1958, 47, 68).

Habermas (1987) argues that in modern society the economy and politics are systems that make use of the steering media of money and power to influence and colonise society. The modern economy is the capitalistic way of organizing production, distribution and consumption—that is, it is a system that is based on the accumulation of money capital by the sale of commodities that are produced by workers who are compelled to sell their labour power as a commodity to owners of capital and means of production, who thereby gain the right to exploit labour for a specific time period. The modern political system is a bureaucratic state system, in which liberal parliamentary democracy (including political parties, elections, parliamentary procedures), legal guarantees of liberal freedoms (freedoms of speech, assembly, association, the press, movement, ownership, belief and thought, opinion and expression) and the monopolisation of the means of violence by coercive state apparatuses guarantee the reproduction of the existing social order.

Besides the capitalist economy and the state, modern society also consists of the cultural sphere that can be divided into a private and a public culture. Hannah Arendt stresses that the private sphere is a realm of modern society that functions as “a sphere of intimacy” (Arendt 1958, 38) and includes family life as well as emotional and sexual relationships. Habermas adds to this analysis that consumption plays a central role in the private sphere: “On the other hand, the family now evolved even more into a consumer of

income and leisure time, into the recipient of publicly guaranteed compensations and support services. Private autonomy was maintained not so much in functions of control as in functions of consumption” (Habermas 1989, 156). He furthermore points out that the private sphere is the realm of leisure activities: “Leisure behavior supplies the key to the floodlit privacy of the new sphere, to the externalization of what is declared to be the inner life” (ibid., 159). In other words, one can say that the role of the private sphere in capitalism as sphere of individual leisure and consumption that Habermas identifies is that it guarantees the reproduction of labour power so that the latter remains vital, productive and exploitable.

But there are also social forms of organizing leisure and consumption, such as fan communities, amateur sports clubs, churches, etc. This means that there are both individual and social forms of organizing everyday life. Together they form the sphere of culture understood as the sphere in which mundane everyday life is organized, and meaning is given to the world. The basic role of culture in society is that it guarantees the reproduction of the human body and mind, which includes on the one hand activities like sports, sexuality, health, social and beauty care, and on the other hand activities like education, knowledge production (such as in universities), art, literature, etc. If these activities are organized on an individual basis, then they take place in the private sphere; if they are organized on a social basis outside of the home and the family, then they take place in the sociocultural sphere.

The private and the sociocultural sphere together form the cultural sphere or what Habermas (1987) terms the lifeworld: it is a realm of society where communicative action takes place that allows definitions of a situation and participants to obtain an understanding of the subjective, social and objective world. It enables the “continual process of definition and redefinition” (ibid., 121–122). “Language and culture are constitutive of the lifeworld itself” (ibid., 125). Culture can be constituted only through the speech-acts of communication. It has a social character. The lifeworld also contains “culturally transmitted background knowledge” (ibid., 134). “The structures of the lifeworld lay down the forms of the intersubjectivity of possible understanding. [. . .] The lifeworld is, so to speak, the transcendental site where speaker and hearer meet, where they can reciprocally raise claims that their utterances fit the world (objective, social, or subjective), and where they can criticize and confirm those validity claims, settle their disagreements, and arrive at agreements” (ibid., 134). The lifeworld is the cultural realm of meaning making, definitions of situations and the gaining of understandings of the world.

According to Habermas (1989), the realms of the systems of the economy and the state on the one hand and the lifeworld (culture in our model) on the other hand are mediated by what he terms the public sphere or civil society. Hegel, who is considered one of the most influential writers on civil society (Anheier, Toepfler and List, 2010, 338), described civil society as political and as a sphere that is separate from the state and from the private life of the

family (Hegel 1821, §§157, 261). Habermas' (1989) seminal work describes how eighteenth-century France and Germany were characterised by a separation of spheres. Civil society was the private "realm of commodity exchange and social labor" (Habermas, 1989, 30) that was distinct from the public sphere and the sphere of public authority. This understanding was reflected in liberal market-driven civil society conceptions of thinkers like Locke and Smith that positioned economic man at the heart of civil society (Ehrenberg and Trosman 1999). The structural transformation of the public sphere has in the nineteenth and twentieth century, according to Habermas, resulted in an increasing collapse of boundaries between spheres so that "private economic units" attained "quasi-political character" and from "the midst of the publicly relevant sphere of civil society was formed a repoliticized social sphere" that formed a "functional complex that could no longer be differentiated according to criteria of public and private" (Habermas 1989, 148). One can say that the structural transformation Habermas describes meant the emergence of the modern economy as a separate powerful sphere of modern society and the separation of the economy from civil society. This notion of civil society could be found in the works of Montesquieu, Rousseau and Tocqueville and has today become the common understanding (Ehrenberg and Trosman 1999). In later works, Habermas (1987, 320) as a result describes contemporary modern society as consisting of systems (economic system, administrative system) and the lifeworld (private sphere, public sphere). Civil society as part of the lifeworld now consists of "associational networks" that "articulate political interests and confront the state with demands arising from the life worlds of various groups" (Habermas 2006, 417). Civil society's "voluntary associations, interest groups, and social movements always strive to maintain a measure of autonomy from the public affairs of politics and the private concerns of economics" (Ehrenberg and Trosman 1999, 235). Habermas (2006) mentions these examples for civil society actors: social movements, general interest groups, advocates for certain interests, experts and intellectuals. Qualities and concepts of civil society mentioned in the literature include: voluntariness, nongovernmental associations, healthy democracy, public sphere, exchange of opinions, political debate, self-organization, self-reflexion, non-violence and struggle for egalitarian diversity (Keane 2010; Kenny 2007; Salzman 2011; Sheldon 2001, 62–63).

Salzman (2011, 199) mentions "environmental groups, bowling leagues, churches, political parties, neighbourhood associations, social networking Internet sites" as examples for civil society organizations. Keane (2010) adds charities, independent churches and publishing houses as examples. In civil society theory, the concept of hegemony in particular has been used for stressing civil society's aspects of contradiction, power, counter-power, ideology and its dialectical relation to the state and the economy (Anheier et al. 2010, 408ff.).

Habermas (1987, 320) mentions the following social roles that are constitutive for modern society: employee, consumer, client and citizen. Other

roles, such as wife, husband, houseworker, immigrant, convicts, etc., can certainly be added. So what is constitutive for modern society is not just the separation of spheres and roles but also the creation of power structures, in which roles are constituted by power relations (such as employer/employee, state bureaucracy/citizen, citizen of a nation state/immigrant, manager/assistant, dominant gender roles/marginalised gender roles). Power means in this context the disposition of actors over means that allow them to control structures and influence processes and decisions in their own interest at the expense of other individuals or groups.

Modern society is based on political and economic exchange relations. Based on different roles that humans have in the lifeworld, they exchange products of their social actions with goods and services provided by the systems of the state and the economy. Table 1.1 gives an overview of these exchanges and specifies the two sides of the exchanges. The systems of the state and the lifeworld stand in modern society in exchange relations. Lifeworld communication is according to Habermas (1987) based mainly on communicative action and is not mediated by money and power. The lifeworld is more a realm of altruistic and voluntary behaviour.

Systemic logic and exchange logic is not an automatic feature of these realms; it can, however, shape them. The political public sphere, civic cultures and private life are not independent from the political and the economic systems: they create legitimacy and hegemony (political, public, civic cultures) in relation to the political system, as well as consumption needs and the reproduction of labour power in relation to the economy (private life, family).

Claus Offe (1985) distinguishes between sociopolitical movements, which want to establish binding goals for a wider community and are recognised as legitimate, and sociocultural movements, which want to establish goals,

Table 1.1 A typology of different forms of non-institutional action (adapted from Offe 1985)

Civil society		
Goals	Recognised as legitimate	Illegitimate
Binding for a wider community	Sociopolitical and socio-economic movements (=Political public sphere) 1) NGOs: more hierarchical, formal, lobbying 2) Social movements: grassroots, informal, protest	Terrorism
Non-binding for a wider community	Sociocultural movements (=Civic cultures) Consensus, shared interests and values, affinity Examples: friendship networks, neighbourhoods, work networks, churches, sects, sports team, fan communities, professional organizations/associations	Crime

which are not binding for a wider community (retreat) and are considered legitimate. Further forms of non-institutional action would be private crime (non-binding goals, illegitimate) and terrorism (binding goals, illegitimate). Offe's distinction between sociopolitical and sociocultural movements has been reflected in Touraine's (1985) distinction between social movements and cultural movements. Table 1.1 summarises the discussion. We add to this distinction one between sociopolitical and socio-economic movements.

The struggles of socio-economic movements are oriented on the production and distribution of material resources that are created and distributed in the economic system. They are focused on questions of the production, distribution and redistribution of material resources. One modern socio-economic movement is the working class movement, which struggles for the betterment of living conditions as they are affected by working conditions and thereby opposes the economic interests of those who own capital and the means of production. In the history of the working class movement, there have been fierce debates about the role of reforms and revolution. A more recent debate concerns the role and importance of non-wage workers in the working class movement (Cleverly 2000). Another socio-economic movement is the environmental movement, which struggles for the preservation and sustainable treatment of the external nature of humans (the environment). Whereas the working class movement is oriented on relationships between organized groups of human beings (classes) with definite interests, the ecological movement is oriented on the relationship between human beings and their natural environment. Both relations (human-human, human-nature) are at the heart of the economy and interact with each other.

Sociopolitical movements are movements that struggle for the recognition of collective identities of certain groups in society via demands on the state. They are oriented on struggles that relate to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and origin, age, neighbourhood, peace or disability. Examples are the feminist movement, the gay rights movement, the anti-racist movement, the youth movement, the peace movement, the anti-penitentiary movement, the anti-psychiatry movement, etc. The common characteristic of these movements is that their struggles are oriented on recognising specific groups of people as having specific rights, ways of life or identities. So, for example, the peace and human rights movement struggles for the recognition of the basic right of all humans to exist free from the threat of being killed or coerced by violence. As another example, racist movements struggle for recognising specific groups (like white people) as either superior and other groups as inferior or so culturally or biologically different that they need to be separated.

Sociocultural movements are groups of people that have shared interests and practices relating to ways of organizing one's private life. Examples include friendship networks, neighbourhood networks, churches, sports groups, fan communities, etc.

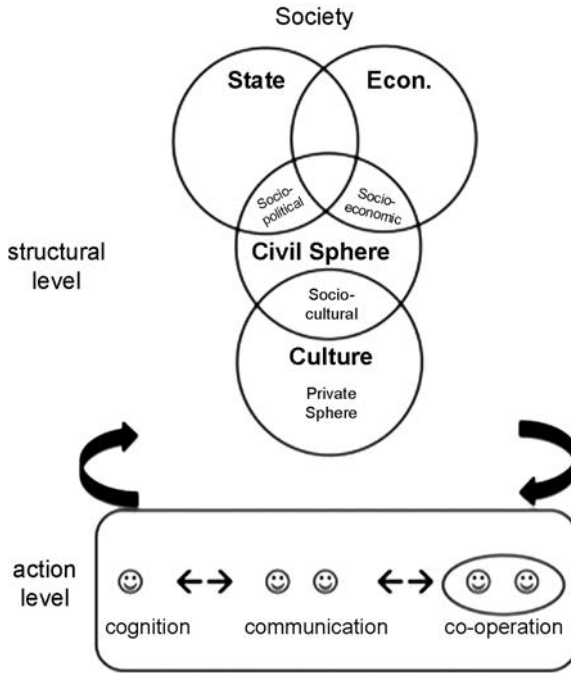


Figure 1.1 A visualisation of modern society

Figure 1.1 visualises the model of modern society introduced in this section. The model is grounded in the social theory insight that the relationship between structures and actors is dialectical and that both levels continuously create each other (for dialectical solutions of the structure-agency problem in social theory, see Archer 1995; Bhaskar 1993; Bourdieu 1986; Fuchs 2003a, 2003b; Giddens 1984).

Given that the focus of this chapter is social media, the question arises of how to locate the media more generally within a model of society. Media can be defined as structures that enable and constrain human information processes of cognition, communication and cooperation, which are practices that produce and reproduce informational structures. In modern society, media can be organized in different forms. Murdock (2011, 18) argues that the media can be organized within the capitalist economy, the state or civil society, which results in three different political economies of the media that are respectively based on commodities, public goods or gifts. In our model of society, civil society is made up of the sociopolitical, the socio-economic and the sociocultural spheres, which corresponds to the three organizational forms of the media that Murdock identifies. Therefore we identify sociopolitical (organized by the state as public service media), socio-economic (organized by private companies as commercial media) and sociocultural (organized by

Table 1.2 A typology of roles in modern society

Political roles Citizen, politician, bureaucrat, political party member	Sociopolitical roles Privacy advocate, electoral reform advocate, feminist activist, gay-rights activists, anti-racist advocate, youth movement advocate, peace movement activist, anti-penitentiary advocate, anti-psychiatry activist, non-governmental organization member/activist, non-parliamentary political activist (student groups, non-parliamentary fascist groups, non-parliamentary leftist groups, etc.)
Economic roles Capital owner, entrepreneur, manager, employee, prosumer, self-employee	Socio-economic roles Labour activist, union member, consumer protectionist, environmental activist
Private roles Lover, family member, friend, consumer, audience member, user	Sociocultural roles Sports group member, fan community member, parishioner, member of a sect or cult, professional organizations and associations, self-help groups, neighbourhood association, etc.

citizens and public interest groups as civil and alternative media) forms of the media. Although there are three organizational forms of the media, there is a specific political economy of the media realm that allocates resources to different media types to a different degree, generally putting civil-society media at a disadvantage, and favouring capitalist media organizations.

Based on the distinction of different spheres of modern society, we can discern various social roles that are part of the subsystems of modern society (see Table 1.2).

Based on the theoretical models of the information process and modern society, we can next characterise social media communication.

4. WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY IN MODERN SOCIETY?

The study of social media activity is due to the novelty of blogs and social networks like Facebook and Twitter, a relatively young endeavour (see Fuchs et al. 2012; Trottier 2012). Based on the theoretical assumptions about the information process (the tripleC model introduced in section two) and society (the model of modern society in section three), we can describe social media surveillance (see Trottier 2012; Fuchs and Trottier 2013; Trottier and Lyon 2012) based on social theory. Thus far, social theory foundations of social media activity have been underrepresented in scholarly literature.

Some constitutive features of social media like Facebook are the following:

Integrated sociality: Social media enable the convergence of the three modes of sociality (cognition, communication, cooperation) in an integrated sociality. This means, for example, on Facebook, an individual creates multi-media content like a video on the cognitive level, publishes it so that others can comment (the communicative level) and allows others to manipulate and remix the content, so that new content with multiple authorship can emerge. One step does not necessarily result in the next, but the technology has the potential to enable the combination of all three activities in one space. Facebook, by default, encourages the transition from one stage of sociality to the next, within the same social space.

Integrated roles: Social media like Facebook are based on the creation of personal profiles that describe the various roles of a human being's life. In contemporary modern society, different social roles tend to converge in various social spaces. The boundaries between public life and private life as well as the workplace and the home have become porous. As we have seen, Habermas identified systems (the economy, the state) and the lifeworld as central realms of modern society. The lifeworld can be further divided into culture and civil society. We act in different social roles in these spheres: for example, as employees and consumers in the economic systems, as clients and citizens in the state system, as activists in the sociopolitical sphere and as lovers and consumers in socio-economic sphere. We also act as family members in the private sphere, or as fan community members, parishioners, professional association members, etc. in the sociocultural sphere. A new form of liquid and porous sociality has emerged, in which we partly act in different social roles in the same social space. On social media like Facebook, we act in various roles, but all of these roles become mapped onto single profiles that are observed by different people who are associated with our different social roles. This means that social media like Facebook are social spaces, in which social roles tend to converge and become integrated in single profiles.

Integrated and converging communication on social media: On social media like Facebook, various social activities (cognition, communication, cooperation) in different social roles that belong to our behaviour in systems (economy, state) and the lifeworld (the private sphere, the socio-economic sphere, the sociopolitical sphere, the sociocultural sphere) are mapped to single profiles. In this mapping process, data about (a) social activities within (b) social roles are generated. This means that a Facebook profile holds (a1) personal data, (a2) communicative data, (a3) social network data/community data in relation to (b1) private roles (friend, lover, relative, father, mother, child, etc.), (b2) civic roles (sociocultural roles as fan community members, neighbourhood association members, etc.), (b3) public roles (socio-economic and sociopolitical roles as activists and advocates) and (b4) systemic roles (in politics: voter, citizen, client, politician, bureaucrat, etc.; in the economy: worker, manager, owner, purchaser/

consumer, etc.). The different social roles and activities tend to converge, as, for example, in the situation where the workplace is also a playground, where friendships and intimate relations are formed and dissolved and where spare time activities are conducted. This means that social media surveillance is an integrated form of surveillance, in which one finds surveillance of different (partly converging) activities in different partly converging social roles with the help of profiles that hold a complex networked multitude of data about humans.

Figure 1.2 visualises the communication process on one single social media system (such as Facebook, etc.). The total social media communication process is a combination and network of a multitude of such processes. The integration of different forms of sociality and social roles on social media means that there is a myriad of possible social functions that any single platform can serve. Individual citizens may use it to communicate with other citizens in the context of any number of social roles, as well as for purposes that may transcend roles. They may also communicate with organizations and institutions for the same purposes. They may also simply monitor the communication in which any of these social actors are engaged. Institutions, including branches of the state, may do all of the foregoing as well. For this reason, the following section considers a theoretical understanding of the state, and of related concepts, in order to underscore the relevance of social media for modern society and phenomena such as politics, protest, crime and revolutions.

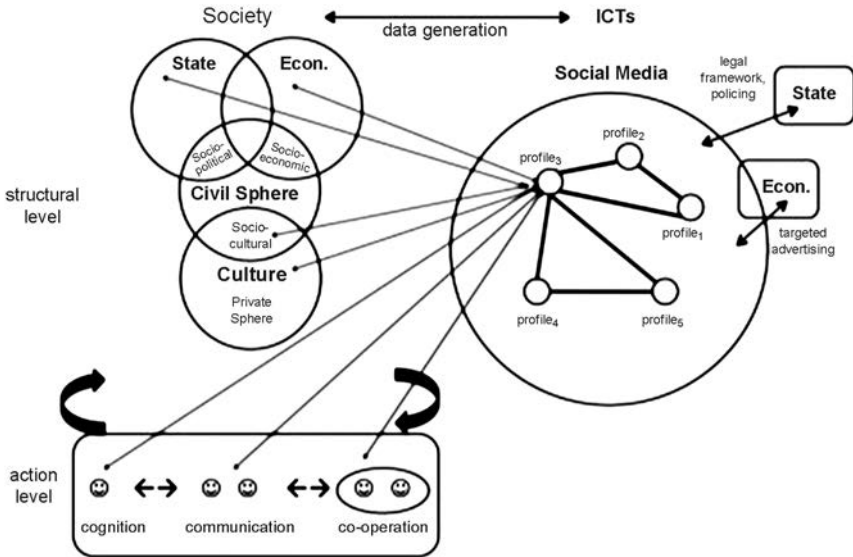


Figure 1.2 The process of social media communication

5. WHAT IS THE STATE?

Thinkers of the modern age from Hegel to Habermas and beyond have described the emergence of modern society as a disembedding of social spheres, such that state power was separated from economic power. Whereas in feudal societies the emperors and the aristocracy controlled both political and economic power that formed a unity, modern society is based on a differentiation of the social structure. The question that arises for any political theory that wants to conceptualise the state is where to draw the boundary between what is the state and what is situated outside of it. There is a clear demarcation of the state from the economy, although the modern economy and the state are not only separate but at the same time interdependent and so form a dialectical unity in diversity. The question that arises is, however, how broad the concept of the state shall be constructed and where to draw its boundaries.

Louis Althusser (1971) distinguishes between repressive and ideological state apparatuses. The first are “a force of repressive execution and intervention ‘in the interests of the ruling classes’ in the class struggle conducted by the bourgeoisie and its allies against the proletariat” (ibid., 137) and include the police, prisons, the army, courts, the government, political administration and the head of state. Ideological state apparatuses include religions, the education system, the family, the legal system, the political system including parties, trade-unions, the media and communications, and culture (ibid., 143).

Althusser has the broadest possible concept of the state in so far as one theoretically presupposes a differentiation of the state from the economy. He includes in the notion of the state everything that classical Marxist theory has termed the ‘superstructure.’ Althusser explicitly acknowledges Gramsci’s influence on his notion of the state:

To my knowledge, Gramsci is the only one who went any distance in the road I am taking. He had the ‘remarkable’ idea that the State could not be reduced to the (Repressive) State Apparatus, but included, as he put it, a certain number of institutions from ‘civil society’: the Church, the Schools, the trade unions, etc. Unfortunately, Gramsci did not systematize his institutions, which remained in the state of acute but fragmentary notes. (1971, 142)

Although the agency and class struggle-oriented Gramsci and the structuralist and functionalist Althusser are strikingly different social theorists, their approaches converge in a comparable concept of the state.

The state is “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules” (Gramsci 1971, 244). Hegemony means “an active and voluntary (free) consent” (ibid., 271). The law, military, police system, secret services and prison

system are the repressive elements of the state system that aim at guaranteeing internal and external defence of the system. The state school system is for Gramsci (*ibid.*, 258) the most important element of state hegemony that aims at creating active consent. Both “force and consent” (*ibid.*, 271) are exercised for constituting, maintaining and reproducing the state system. But there are also elements of “cultural hegemony” (*ibid.*, 258) outside direct state control, such as religions/churches, associations, newspapers, theatre, films, radio, other media, public meetings, language and dialects, folklore and traditions, conversations and morals (*ibid.*, 1988, esp. 356).

The disadvantages of Althusser and Gramsci’s state-concept are at least threefold:

1. It implies that ideologies are not a form of repression and violence and that repression does not also work outside of physical violence via ideological manipulation. Theories of violence, such as the one by Johan Galtung (1990), in contrast distinguish between physical, structural and ideological violence.
2. Althusser overstretches the notion of the state to such an extent that culture as the sphere of the production and reproduction of the human mind and body and communication become mere attributes of the state, which does not allow for any relative autonomy of these realms from the concept of the state.
3. As Althusser assumes that “the State [. . .] is the State of the ruling class,” which as a logical consequence of his broad conception implies that ideology is the “ideology of ‘the ruling class’” (1971, 146), his approach does not leave any space for a culture that is both critical of capitalist and state power—that is, a critical pedagogy, critical science, critical philosophy and theory, etc. Althusser’s totalising concept of the state squashes potentials of critique and struggle that are situated in the realm of communication and information.

Another important theoretical question that arises is whether civil society and culture stand outside the state or are part of it. Gramsci says that “civil society and the state are one and the same” (1988, 210), so for him the “State = political society + civil society” (1971, 263) and “hegemony protected by the armour of coercion” (*ibid.*, 263). A concept of the state that conceives it as the unity of coercive and ideological state apparatuses inflates the state concept to a maximum and does not leave any conceptual space for conceiving culture and civil society as neither controlled by the state nor capitalism, but as the people’s common culture.

We favour a delimitation of the state in modern society that sees the latter constituted as a complex whole of interdependent spheres so that there is a distinction between the relative autonomy of the economy, culture and politics that is mediated by interlacing elements and spheres. The relevance of culture is evidenced not just by the rise of what is today termed cultural

industries, knowledge production or the information society but also by the fact that state theorists such as Bob Jessop no longer find the long-standing preoccupation with the difference of the economy and the state—as also practised by French regulation theory—sufficient, but stress in addition the need of a “cultural political economy” (Sum and Jessop 2013). As media and communication scholars we are on the one hand sceptical towards the introduction of this ‘discovery’ as a novelty because the approach of the political economy of media and culture goes at least back to Dallas Smythe’s works in the 1940s—a tradition that was followed up by Herbert Schiller, Graham Murdock, Peter Golding, Nicholas Garnham and many others and has for a long time been continued as the political economy of communication approach (for overviews, see Golding and Murdock 1997; Wasko, Murdock and Sousa 2011). On the other hand the concept implies a differentiation and important development of state theory away from Gramsci and Althusser’s conflationism.

The state, like many similar concepts, is characterised by the following tension: it has an intangible quality, but can be identified in terms of some key components and functions that it performs. These components are considered in the following section. As Ralph Miliband notes, “‘The state’ is not a thing, that it does not, as such, exist. What ‘the state’ stands for is a number of particular institutions which, together, constitute its reality, and which interact as parts of what may be called the state system” (1969, 46). More concretely, he references Weber to note that the state is a “monopoly of legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (*ibid.*, 47). Stuart Hall et al., drawing upon Gramsci, take an abstract approach to the state, referring to it as “a particular site or level of the social formation” that is “irreplaceably by any other structure” (1978, 205). They later claim that the state takes an organizational role in society, notably in the domain of financial capital.

In order to arrive at an understanding of the state, it will help to consider its conceptual boundaries vis-à-vis closely related concepts. The state overlaps with politics, but these are two distinct social systems. Likewise, the state is not synonymous with the nation, as a state can embody several nations (Poulantzas 1978). Furthermore, Nicos Poulantzas notes a tendency to recognise only state power in state activity. While there is an intrinsic interest in recognising the state as political domination of the dominant class, this “reduces *the state apparatus* to *state power*” (*ibid.*, 12). Poulantzas acknowledges that the state constitutes relations of production—for example, through organized physical repression as well as managing ideological relations. Yet the full activities of the state exceed this, not the least because ideology involves material practices (*ibid.*, 28). The state is also characterised by a tension of existing in isolation on the one hand and its interdependencies with other social structures on the other hand. Indeed, it can be said that the state is meaningful only in relation to a broader theoretical understanding of society.

Political economist Bob Jessop's Strategic-Relational Approach is especially helpful in considering this conceptual and functional interdependency. It views the state as not simply existing-for-others but also with a need to self-sustain. The state also has an impact on the degree of success of various political forces. The Strategic-Relational Approach considers three shaping strategies: first, the state has resources and power that "underpin its relative autonomy," but also "distinctive liabilities or vulnerabilities, and its operations depend on resources produced elsewhere in its environment" (Jessop 2007, 6). Second, states direct political elements "through their control over and/or (in)direct access to these state capacities—capacities whose effectiveness also depends on links to forces and powers that exist and operate beyond the state's formal boundaries" (ibid.) Third, state power depends "on the structural relations between the state and its encompassing political system, on the strategic ties among politicians and state officials and other political forces, and on the complex web of structural interdependencies and strategic networks that link the state system to its broader social environment" (ibid.). The state is therefore bound by a tension between "majestic isolation" and being "embedded in wider political system" (ibid.), and this tension is not easy to reconcile. This is linked to a tension between 'self-serving' and 'at the service of others,' considered ahead.

The state can be understood as an antagonist of individual interests (through its own self-preservation), but also as being at the service of individual citizens. It is said to exist not for the sake of self-preservation but rather some kind of communitarian service. As Jessop indicates, the "*core of the state apparatus* can be defined as a distinct ensemble of institutions and organisations whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on a given population in the name of their 'common interest' or 'general will'" (2007, 9). Yet it is immediately worth noting that any attempt to define the 'general will' reflects a particular "articulation and aggregation of interest, opinions and values" (ibid., 11). We can therefore elaborate on this institutional/individual tension by considering which individuals it serves. In other words, it can be understood as a manifestation of class relations: "The (capitalist) State should not be regarded as an intrinsic entity: like 'capital,' *it is rather a relationship of forces, or more precisely the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions, such as this is expressed within the State in a necessarily specific form*" (Poulantzas 1978, 128–129).

Poulantzas and Jessop's approach allows for differentiating the concept of the state as field-of-power forces from monolithic concepts of the state that conceive it as a homogenous apparatus or machine of the ruling class for dominating the ruled class. First, there are factions of the capitalist class (such as transnational corporations, small and medium enterprises, finance capital, commercial capital, manufacturing capital, cultural capital, etc.) that compete for shares of capital and power and therefore have to a certain degree conflicting interests. Second, although there are overlaps of

the capitalist class and the political elite (e.g., when managers become politicians, bureaucrats become consultants for companies or private-public-partnerships are established as part of neoliberal governance systems), their activities, personnel and interests are not coextensive. The differentiation of the state and the capitalist economy in modern society has also brought about a division of labour between capitalists and politicians.

Third, the state's class power can be challenged by left-wing political movements that want to establish a transitory state that drives back capitalist interests and advances welfare and social benefits for all. It is, of course, doubtful in this context that a socialist state can exist in a capitalist society and that state power is necessary in all forms of society; at the same time progressive movements' goal to conquer state power is not necessarily a social democratic-reformist strategy, but can be based on politics of radical reformism that are politically immanent and transcendental at the same time. The state is, however, challenged and reproduced not just by political parties but also by social movements organized in civil society.

Given these complexities and contradictions of the state, it can be conceived only as a contradictory force field with temporal unity—a power bloc—between conflicting interests that form political alliances. The state is an “institutional crystallization,” “the material condensation of a relationship of forces,” “a strategic field and process of intersecting power networks, which both articulate and exhibit mutual contradictions and displacements” (Poulantzas 1980, 136). The state does not directly map or mirror the interests of the capitalist class, but rather crystallises the complexities of the class structure in contradictory ways. It is precisely through the articulation of complex factions and oppositions that dominant interests are transposed from economic power into state power and in a dialectical reversal back from state power to economic power. The “state crystallizes the relations of production and class relations. The modern political state does not translate the ‘interests’ of the dominant classes at the political level, but the relationship between those interests and the interests of the dominated classes—which means that it precisely constitutes the ‘political’ expression of the interests of the dominant classes” (Poulantzas 2008, 80).

Based on the tensions crystallising in the state, we may reflect on the nature of a state presence on social media. Insofar as the state is meant to serve its citizens, there is the possibility that a state presence on social media can be an extension of that service. Indeed, scholars have made appeals to the idea of public service social media (Brevini 2013; Fuchs 2014c) that could resemble the BBC model of public service broadcast media. On the other hand, the state may also rely on social media to maintain and enforce a particular social order by resorting to its monopoly of violence or ideological power. Indeed, there are more tangible examples of governments seeking to restrict flows of communication online, monitoring social media content that is framed as a threat to social order¹ and using these platforms as a means to promote a particular social order.² Yet a theoretically grounded

understanding of state activity on social media will make more sense when considering the constitutive elements of the state. Public service media as well as state-owned industries show that the state is distinct from the economy to a varying degree. A public economy is based on the state's specific ownership-control of parts of the economy so that the distance between the state and the economy is smaller than in the private property economy. In public service media, the state organizes both the economy and culture of specific modes of public information and communication.

6. WHAT ARE THE BRANCHES OF THE STATE?

We should next consider the organizations and other elements that constitute the state. Jessop notes that the state is composed of institutions above, below and around its core, and that the relations to and among these are not obvious (2007, 10). Furthermore, these institutions, articulation, and the relation to state and society depend on the "nature of social formation of past history" (*ibid.*). The state has components, but there is limited purpose in speaking of it in this way, as it is also conceived of as a kind of unified (albeit amorphous) entity. It is also worth noting that the state is more than the "mere assembly of detachable parts" (Poulantzas 1978, 136). Rather, Poulantzas notes that it "exhibits an *apparatus unity* which is normally designated by the term centralization or *centralism*, and which is related to the fissiparous *unity of state power*" (*ibid.*, emphasis in original). The latter concept is explored in a section ahead.

As a first step, the state includes the government, which can briefly be described as the central, executive branch of the state. It is accompanied by the public sector, which are the industries and services that are generally infrastructural, and serve a vital role for economic life (Miliband 1969, 10). The public sector is made up of an administrative system "which now extends far beyond the traditional bureaucracy of the state, and which encompasses a large variety of bodies, often related to particular ministerial departments, or enjoying a greater or lesser degree of autonomy—public corporations, central banks, regulatory commissions, etc.—and concerned with the management of the economic, social, cultural and other activities in which the state is now directly or indirectly involved" (*ibid.*, 47). The state is also composed of the military, which serves the dual function of the "management of violence" as well as maintaining "internal security" (*ibid.*, 48). Another element is the judiciary, which is "constitutionally independent of the political executive and protected from it by security of tenure and other guarantees" (*ibid.*, 49). In principle the judiciary is meant to defend citizen rights from the state, but the interpretation and execution of such a principle are not always clear. Another supplementary component of the state is the sub-central governments. These include provincial, municipal, regional and territorial branches that are approximated to be "more or less

an administrative device” (ibid., 49). Although these occupy a peripheral importance for the state, their functioning often reflects local particularities, and can serve a more central role, for example, during conflicts over sovereignty. In addition to struggles between peripheral and central branches of the government, we may also consider tensions between competing governments—for example, an outgoing liberal party and an incoming conservative one. However, opposition elements are ultimately cooperative in upholding the standing and functioning of the state. As Miliband notes, “By taking part in the work of the legislature, they help the government’s business” (ibid., 50).

Each of the foregoing individual state elements—and the sub-branches and individual/regional offices of which they are composed—may have their own unique kind of engagement with various social media platforms. These engagements will include a variety of ways of broadcasting their own content, communicating with other individual and institutional users and monitoring the presence of those other users. On this note, we may consider the position of the media in relation to the state. Stuart Hall et al. note that “oppositions can and frequently do arise between these institutions within the complex of power in society” (1978, 65), and in particular the media seek to broadcast information that the state would wish to contain. Here we may include state media, which may share some features with other government branches (state funding, explicitly carrying out administrative functions, such as reporting on elections), yet still have the possibility of operating at cross-purposes with the state and government.

We can also consider the possibility of social media in relation to the state. In the case of a state-operated or engineered platform, it serves as an explicit branch of the state. In the case of privately owned social media, the relation with the state becomes less obvious. The private platform might have antagonistic relationship with any single state, especially if it operates in a separate jurisdiction. Yet the more likely pattern is based on cooperation between private social media and the state. As Nick Couldry (2013) indicates, a private social media platform may directly profit from the communication activity it solicits from users, but this activity on a private platform may also simultaneously serve the interests of the state. The best example of this phenomenon is that social media companies benefit from commodifying personal data by selling targeting advertisements, and that the NSA- and GSCHQ-operated global PRISM Internet surveillance system enables the state to access the very same data collected and processed by companies such as Facebook, Google, Apple, AOL, Microsoft, Yahoo, Skype or Paltalk for the purpose of control (see Fuchs 2014c).

The state’s roles in modern society include the regulation of the economy and society (by laws and taxation), control and exertion of the monopoly of the means of internal and external violence, the legitimisation of this monopoly, information gathering about citizens for the purposes of administration and policing, the legal individualisation of humans into specific roles

(such as workers, voters, consumers, owners, etc.), the definition and control of membership and boundaries/closure of society, and the self-description of society in the form of imaginarily constructed narratives termed ‘national identities’ connected to nationalist, patriotic and racist ideologies, as well as population policies for fostering the reproduction of citizens and workforce (Fuchs 2008, 76–89).

Social media are related to all of these state roles, as these platforms contribute to an integration of social roles. We point out two examples: (1) states devise, implement and regulate laws that regulate social media companies’ activities and (2) states are in charge of deriving taxes from social media companies’ revenues for public purposes. Besides laws that affect all companies, states and transnational state conglomerates such as the European Union implement data protection laws that especially affect social media companies. A general problem in this respect is that nation states are spatially bound, whereas capital and information flows are global, fluid and mobile, which creates the problem of which national data protection laws shall apply for social media companies that operate globally. At the same time the different spatial mobilities of the state and global companies enable the Facebooks and Googles of our time to escape national data protection regulations by relocating their corporate headquarters.

Social media corporations are economically predominantly based on targeted advertising and the exploitation of digital labour (Fuchs 2014a, 2014d). This means that they globally derive economic revenues. Neo-liberal governance regimes have all over the world resulted in wage repression, the cutback of state expenditures for social measures and reductions of corporate taxation. Nonetheless corporation tax can be a potentially powerful source of state revenue. We live in times of global crisis, in which after decades of rising inequality and crisis-proneness due to financialisation banks and the rich have been bailed out from their own dawning collapse by a ‘socialism of the rich’ that uses large sums of tax-payers’—that is, predominantly employees, not companies—money. At the same time austerity measures that impact the weakest and poorest and with great likelihood increase inequality have been implemented. In this situation it has become ideologically ever more difficult to justify no or low corporate taxation.

Companies such as Google, Amazon and Starbucks had to appear before the UK Public Accounts Committee in late 2012 to discuss whether they avoided paying taxes in the UK (BBC 2012). Amazon has fifteen thousand employees in the UK, but its headquarters are in Luxembourg, where it has just five hundred employees (*ibid.*). In 2011, it generated revenues of £3.3 billion in the UK, but paid only £1.8 million corporation tax (0.05 per cent) (Griffiths 2012; Barford and Holt 2012). Facebook paid £238,000 corporation tax on a UK revenue of £175 million (0.1 per cent) in 2011 (Moss 2012).

Google has its headquarters in Dublin, but employs around seven hundred people in the UK (Garside 2013). Google’s managing director for the

UK and Ireland, Matt Brittin, admitted that this choice of location is due to the circumstance that the corporation tax is just 12.5 per cent in Ireland, whereas in the UK it was 26 per cent in 2011 (BBC 2012). Google had a UK turnover of £395 million in 2011, but paid taxes of only £6 million (1.5 per cent) (*ibid.*). While large media companies pay only a very low share of taxes, governments argue that state budgets are small, implement austerity measures and as a result cut social and welfare benefits, hitting the poorest in society.

In the House of Commons' Public Accounts Committee's inquiry on tax avoidance, Google's Brittin admitted that this structure serves to pay low taxes. He said in the inquiry session conducted on 16 May 2013, that "we talked about Bermuda in the last hearing, and I confirmed that we do use Bermuda. Obviously, Bermuda is a low-tax environment."³ Confronted with Google's low level of corporation tax paid in the UK, Eric Schmidt said that "people we [Google] employ in Britain are certainly paying British taxes" (BBC 2013). His logic here is that Google does not have to pay taxes because its employees do.

The contradiction of national and spatially bounded state power and global corporate power that manage global information flows on social media have combined with neoliberal policy regimes, resulting in the paralysis of corporate taxation and social media corporations' practices of tax avoidances. Overcoming this huge structural problem requires implementing global corporate tax laws, authorities, controls and enforcement mechanisms. It requires that the state transits from its conservative crisis politics of policing the poor and the crisis to policing corporate crimes.

7. WHAT IS POLITICS? WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE STATE AND POLITICS?

We can begin with an understanding of politics as a relational activity. Mouffe refers to the political as "the potential antagonisms inherent in human relations," which "indicates the ensemble of discourses, institutions and practices which aim at establishing an order; at organising human coexistence, in a context that is always conflictual because of the presence of the political" (1993, 8). Thus, politics—at least in class societies based on contradictory interests—can be understood as a mode of social organization through conflict.

We may also extend on this definition of modern politics to note that both tangible (such as political parties, staff, events) and less tangible (such as discourses, practices) elements exist in order to raise and resolve conflicts. When we consider the full range of groups and institutions that are involved in politics, these extend beyond commonly held understandings of 'the political.' Lobbyists and pressure groups, multinational corporations, churches and other religious organizations and the mass media all have an

active stake in politics. The people who head these institutions “may wield considerable power and influence, which must be integrated in the analysis of political power in advanced capitalist societies” (Miliband 1969, 51). In the most general sense abstracted from modern society, we can define politics as a system in which humans in public arrive at collectively binding decisions of how to organize society and its resources (Fuchs 2008). In dominative societies, the political system takes on a form in which one group or several groups together hold a monopoly, oligopoly or hierarchical control of decision power.

Politics are not entirely distinct from the state. State branches can perform political roles, even when this directly contradicts their mandate (Ditchburn 2013). Stuart Hall et al., drawing upon Gramsci, claim that the state “plays a critical role in shaping social and political life in such a way as to favour the continued expansion of production and the reproduction of capitalist social relations” (1978, 201). However, it bears noting that politicised components of the state (such as naturally governing parties) are directly plugged in to this role. The degree of closeness between political elements and a state can vary. For example, a ruling political party will have a more intimate relation with the state than the main opposition party, which in turn overlaps more with the state than fringe political parties. Some groups may engage in political activity that is relatively divorced from the state, such as an activist group that does not engage directly with governing political parties, state administration, state-run media, etc., and instead makes appeals to the public through non-state controlled media.

Although political procedures are typically conceived as conflictual, these conflicts can be routinised—and thus dampened—for the purpose of greater state functioning. On the topic of opposing political parties, Miliband notes “the disagreements *between those political leaders who have generally been able to gain high office* have very seldom been of the fundamental kind these leaders and other people so often suggest. What is really striking about *these* political leaders and political office-holders, in relation to each other, is not their many differences, but the extent of their agreement on truly fundamental issues” (1969, 64, emphasis in original). Thus, a highly visible and accessible conflict between a liberal and conservative political party may belie a struggle between competing visions of social organization, including alternatives to late capitalism. It is helpful to consider the discursive and communicative aspects of the political, specifically in terms of their relation to material outcomes. Jessop, drawing from Marx, notes that we ought to consider the “theatricality of politics not only as metaphor but also as a self-conscious political practice on the part of political actors as they sought to persuade and impress their audience by adopting character masks and roles from the historical past and/or from a dramatic repertoire” (2007, 89–90). Communication through staged and scripted performances is the means through which political conflicts are raised and resolved. Intangible aspects are crucial here, as “every political movement needs to find appropriate

discourse and symbolism as the means of political expression to advance its interests” (ibid., 91).

Key elements of the political include the maintenance or reformulation of a particular social order through the communication of discourse and symbolism on particular stages. Politics are clearly manifest on conventional media platforms, and this is indeed the most accessible way for citizens to watch over and engage with political processes. Most citizens will be able to witness parliamentary procedure, political campaigns and political party scandal only through broadcast media. As a general observation, it would appear that the way that citizens experience politics is through media. Additionally, it is through various media formats that political branches can engage with citizens—for example, by commissioning polls to determine voting intentions. The continued engagement of social media by citizens means that political power and influence, especially insofar as citizens are concerned, will spread to platforms that feature integrated social roles, all of which can be entirely visible to political actors. If we consider the trend of political campaigns making micro-scale appeals to specific neighbourhoods (Payton 2012), campaigns and other kinds of political communication on social media can be even more minutely targeted at individual characteristics and interests. The danger that lies in this development in contemporary neo-liberal governance regimes that tend to commodify everything is that politics becomes public relations, advertising and the selling of an idea, a politician and a party as brand. Translated into the social media world, this then means that social media politics derogates into political advertising, point-and-click politics without real engagement and discussion—a form of pseudo-participation and pseudo-voice. In contrast social media, however, also have the potential to foster political communication between citizens and to support street protests that combine offline and online communication (Fuchs 2014b).

8. WHAT IS POWER? WHAT IS STATE POWER? WHAT IS CORPORATE POWER?

As stated earlier, power refers to the ability to exert influence and control structural and procedural social elements, and is in class societies typically conceived in a zero-sum manner (as it comes at the expense of another individual or group), whereas in non-class societies power can be more equally distributed and benefit all. We can therefore consider power in abstraction as the ability to act, including both self-determined acts and the ability to act upon others. It can be diffuse and capillary (Foucault 1990), but often flows in specific directions and is unevenly concentrated. This concentration is based on the possession of resources, money, reputation, knowledge and social relations.

In its relation to the state, Poulantzas claims that all forms of power exist only insofar as materialised in certain apparatuses, including state

apparatuses (1978, 44–45). Miliband endorses this understanding of state power as located in branches of the state, noting that it is in the administration, military and judiciary, among others, “in which ‘state power’ lies, and it is through them that this power is wielded in its different manifestations by the people who occupy the leading positions in each of these institutions” (1969, 50). We can speculate that state power is linked to the maintenance of legitimacy. Hall underscores the Gramscian notion that state power depends on a popular cohesion, which is maintained by both coercion and consent, and that it operates best when it is perceived as legitimate. Jessop notes that the way legitimacy is “institutionalised and expressed will also vary” (2007, 10) and that there are more forms of ensuring compliance than just coercion (*ibid.*) This assertion seems reasonable, given that each branch of the state acts upon citizens through different relations. Poulantzas echoes this by maintaining a distinction between institutions that “actualise bodily constraint and the permanent threat of mutilation” and those that operate through “a *bodily order* which both institutes and manages bodies by bending and moulding them into shape and inserting them in the various institutions and apparatuses” (1978, 29, emphasis in original).

Although one might consider the general population to be excluded from exerting state power, insofar that this power acts upon them, Poulantzas claims that the popular masses can be present in certain state apparatuses such as the military, even if these serve to otherwise exclude and coerce popular masses (1978, 152). On the topic of class-based asymmetries of power, he also notes that these “are not reducible to the State” (*ibid.*, 37). However, the state plays a strong constitutive role, which “should be understood in the strong sense of the term” (*ibid.*, 38). There is no such social phenomenon “as posed in a state prior to the State” (*ibid.*, 39).

Economic power broadly refers to intervention in economic life (Miliband 1969, 10). This ability to intervene is in capitalism directly related to corporate production processes, which are “grounded on the *unity* of the labour process [. . .] the *primacy* of the relations of production over the labour process” (Poulantzas 1978, 26, emphasis in original). Corporate power involves private ownership, the labour-capital class relationship, the commodity form and structures of accumulation. Miliband notes the importance of corporate power, notably through the concentration of private economic power, and characterises late capitalism as “all but synonymous with giant enterprise” (1969, 10). Although popular discourse tends to speak about corporate power as a monolithic force, Miliband characterises corporations as “distinct groupings and interests, whose competition greatly affects the political process” (*ibid.*, 44–45). However, such competition does not “prevent the separate elites in capitalist society from constituting a dominant economic class, possessed of a high degree of cohesion and solidarity, with common interests and common purposes which far transcend their specific differences and disagreements” (*ibid.*).

Corporate power and state power are intertwined. Both serve as constitutive forces in society, and the reproduction of capitalism in particular “is expressed in state economic functions, according to the precise stage and phase of capitalism; whether it is a question of repressive violence, ideological inculcation, disciplinary normalisation, the organisation of space and time or the creation of consent, the activity of the State is related as a whole to these economic functions properly so called” (Poulantzas 1978, 163). Insofar as the state serves to structure society, it stands to reason that it has a more or less tangible connection to economic power. Corporate interests can generally rely on the service and good will of governments (Miliband 1969, 85–88). Indeed, they can even flourish under fascist and other totalitarian state regimes. As Miliband indicates, corporate post-war success is not indicative of a dramatic turnaround, but rather is a testament to its functioning even during state intervention: “businesses, particularly large-scale businesses, did enjoy such an advantage *inside* the state system, by virtue of the composition and ideological inclination of the state elite” (ibid., 131, emphasis in original).

The actual relationship between corporate interests and the state is not consistent. The state may act against the economic and employment interests of civil servants and other wage-earners, but may justify this decision in the “national interest, the health of the economy, the defence of the currency, the good of the workers, and so on” (Miliband 1969, 74–75). Thus, a general perception of ‘public interest’ may in fact reflect a pairing of state and corporate interests, and of state and corporate power. Miliband (ibid., 51), citing Karl Kautsky (1903, 13), writes that the corporate elite “‘rules but does not govern,’ though he added immediately that ‘it contents itself with ruling the government.’” One of the prominent ways corporate power can control state power is through regulatory capture. This is when a regulatory or otherwise administrative state branch is seized and controlled by corporate interests (“Halliburton” 2009). Miliband notes that “one of the most notable features of advanced capitalism is precisely what might be called without much exaggeration their growing colonisation of the upper reaches of the administrative part of that system [state system]” (1969, 53).

We may situate the media industries as playing an important role for corporate power: “they too are both the expression of a system of domination, and a means of reinforcing it” (Miliband 1969, 198). Here, the informational aspect of mass media is a means to render an existing state and corporate regime meaningful to its citizens (cognition), to communicate this (imaginary or non-imaginary) meaningfulness to the citizens (communication) and also to reinforce that existing social order (cooperation). Extending from Miliband’s quote earlier, we may consider social media platforms in the context of intersecting state and corporate power. The most popular platforms come from Silicon Valley, which is ideologically framed in terms of an iconoclastic exceptionalism from social structures such as taxation regimes.

This suggests a kind of avoidance of regulation (taxation; data protection; broadcasting standards). Even in a context where platforms struggle to yield high profits, the founders and owners of these platforms exercise tremendous corporate power through the exploitation of their own workers,⁴ as well as the exploitation of users who render platforms valuable through their own labour (see Fuchs 2014a). Low tax rates are an example where social media corporate power is at loggerheads with state power, as this is a zero-sum allocation of financial capital. However, a powerful corporate social media platform also serves state power when state actors can make use of a social media corporation's penetration into so many integrated branches of social life. In this volume, Thomas Poell provides a detailed exploration of state dependence on telecommunication and surveillance technologies, and the kind of corporate collaboration that emerges as a result. In other cases, as Sara Salem points out in her chapter in this volume, state power may be challenged by corporate power. For example, satellite media might be ideologically opposed to state-run media, or social media may constitute a kind of public sphere for activism and mobilisation. However, Salem is careful to point out that corporate interests are not aligned with citizens in these cases, and any function such interests serve for mobilisation can be fleeting (as Poell also indicates with the example of Google Reader's demise). As for the state, any attempt to disrupt or displace its power will likely result in renewed attempts to reassert such control. Elise Thorburn's chapter on live streaming technology offers a cogent account of its disruption to and reassertion of state power.

9. WHAT IS CRIME? WHAT ARE THE POLICE? WHAT FUNCTION DOES THE POLICE HAVE AS PART OF THE STATE?

State power and hegemony may be contested through a variety of means. These affronts to state power are "moments when the whole basis of political leadership and cultural authority becomes exposed and contested" (Hall et al. 1978, 217), and are met with a shift from consent to coercion-based forms of maintaining state power. Criminal acts are made meaningful through a labelling aspect, such that seemingly identical acts may or may not be designated as criminal, depending on mitigating circumstances such as where and when the act takes place, and who is performing the act. But there is more to crime and criminal acts than simple labelling. As Hall et al. indicate, there are "historic and structural forces at work" that are often relegated to background (*ibid.*, 185). Thus, crime, as a challenge to state power, and crime prevention (such as policing) as a reassertion of state power exist only in relation to each other (*ibid.*). Crime and policing are not just specific

manifestations of social conflicts in contradictory societies, but at the level of culture and the state often serve as precedents for the formation of what Hall et al. (ibid.) term conservative ideologies of crime that claim that crime can be overcome only by law and order, tough prison sentences (or even the death penalty), strong presence of police and security forces, constant control of public and private spaces by surveillance technologies, and large tax expenditures for internal and external security (often at the expense of social security mechanisms).

As branches of the state, the police as well as the military are “pre-eminently repressive” (Poulantzas 1978, 127) in their efforts to maintain state power. They exist primarily to reinforce an existing social order, including private property and current wealth distribution. The parameters of criminality and state response are designated by law, which is “an integral part of the repressive order and of the organisation of violence. By issuing rules and passing laws, the State establishes an initial field of injunctions, prohibitions and censorship, and thus institutes the practical terrain and object of violence. Furthermore, law organizes the conditions for physical repression, designating its modalities and structuring the devices by means of which it is exercised. In this sense, law is *the code of organized public violence*” (ibid., 77, emphasis in original). The state can also exceed its own laws, in the higher interest of the state (ibid., 84).

The police, as a branch of the state, are able to maintain control over state and citizen perceptions of criminality through their reliance on official statements in news media. Christopher Schneider focuses on this tendency in his chapter in this volume, and indicates how police are able to transfer this ability to social media platforms, thus reasserting state power on new platforms otherwise framed in terms of citizen counter-power. Social media are also sites where the communicative aspects of crimes can occur. This may include the presentation of evidence. Trottier’s chapter in this collection indicates how such online evidence may come from a variety of sources, including citizens attempting to make each other’s criminal acts visible to police. In other instances, crimes that are primarily manifest as a communicative act (such as uttering death threats or hate speech) can be manifest on these platforms. As a result of the integrated sociality described earlier, any evidence of criminality, including criminalised communicative acts, has the potential of an amplified exposure and visibility. On the basis of this section and the previous section, we see that social media on the one hand are manifestations of state and corporate power, but that on the other hand these platforms have the potential of constituting (or hosting) a challenge to state power, corporate power and existing social orders. Yet, for these exact reasons, they can also be the site of redoubled efforts of the reassertion of the existing order by state and corporate actors—for example, through surveillance and censorship.

10. WHAT ARE PROTESTS, REVOLUTIONS, RIOTS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS? WHAT ARE THEIR COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES?

As stated earlier, social movements refer to forms of collective action that can be motivated by political, economic or cultural goals. Such movements typically operate outside of grounded state branches, but often aim to act upon it. Della Porta and Mattoni's contribution to this volume demonstrates the fact that social movements are temporal and relational, insofar as they depend on networks that exceed any single organization, and include allies, adversaries, bystanders and mediators. As "processes that interface with societies at many different levels" (della Porta and Mattoni, this volume), social movements are not uniquely mapped onto states or corporations, and can be transnational in their scope.

In terms of how they are manifest, social movements rely on individual members to gather in public. These gatherings are typically in response to a grievance, and may be a means of communicating an explicit desired course of action. As forms of mass mobilisation, they may also be characterised by property damage and physical violence, especially with police and other repressive government branches. These manifestations may be framed as either riots or protests. The distinction between these two depends on several factors, including (1) an explicitly desired political, economic or cultural outcome, (2) association with an explicit social movement organization and (3) the absence or presence of property damage and physical violence. The first two are typically associated with protests, while the latter is associated with riots.

It is crucial to note that the distinction between protests and riots is not obvious, and is partly determined by how these events are labelled by state branches and the media (Lemert 1951). As an example, the mass demonstrations in Toronto in response to the G8/G20 summit in 2010 have been framed by the mass media as both protests (Slaughter 2013) and riots (O'Toole 2013). Protests and riots are both linked with non-hegemonic classes and operate within the framework of state. Poulantzas claims that as a consequence, "the dominated classes and their particular struggles have a specific presence within the structure of the State—a presence that is expressed by the State's material framework bound up with the relations of production, by its hierarchical-bureaucratic organization, and by the reproduction of the social division of labour within the State" (1978, 141). As a result, repressive state branches do not exist simply to "confront the dominated classes head on, but to maintain and reproduce the domination-subordination relationship at the heart of the State: the class enemy is always present within the state" (ibid.). These struggles are not an aberration from state configuration. Rather, these struggles "are bound up with its strategic configurations. As in the case with every power mechanism, the State is the material condensation of a *relationship*" (ibid., 145, emphasis in original).

Social movement activity, including protests and riots, may culminate into revolutions. These refer to political action above and beyond a particular

state configuration, which then supplants that state configuration. As Skocpol states, state power is a basic consideration in revolutions, yet “state power cannot be understood only as an instrument of class domination, nor can changes in state structures be explained primarily in terms of class conflicts” (1979, 284). As a “reconsolidation of state power,” revolutions require: “the reformation of state institutions that have typically been shattered with the fall of the old regime, especially the army and civil administration; it may also require the implementation (or at least recognition after the fact) of more or less extensive political and social changes in order to win or maintain the support (or at least neutrality) of various sectors of the population that have been mobilized during the revolution” (Foran and Goodwin 1993, 210). Social movements can also seize control of the state. Kompatsiaris and Mlyonas’ chapter on Golden Dawn points to a kind of paradox where the movement is acting at a supra-governmental level, all while taking conventional measures to become elected and to govern. In this case state power is “both a partner and adversary for fascist politics” (Kompatsiaris and Mlyonas, this volume). Historically relevant strategies, such as reliance on propaganda, including social media, are troubling iterations of this fascism.

One element of all these kinds of manifestations is that they are typically thought of as occurring in an embodied location, and quite often in the streets. Social movements are not as geographically tangible, but these often depend on visibility for growth and support. Given that these are coordinated acts, they also depend on cognition and communication. Traditional media, notably corporate and state-run media, have historically not been supportive of these manifestations, and often framed them unfavourably. These movements may rely on newsletters and other kinds of alternate media to communicate, although these might have limited circulation. Cable’s chapter in this volume indicates a problematic relation between protest movement’s alternative media (including the use of social media) and mainstream media, given the ability for the latter to repurpose the former’s content for their own ends. Social media allow for a greater communication with the public, including citizens and state. Gerbaudo’s chapter in this volume indicates that these platforms are especially suited for amorphous social movements, as they provide “a horizontal system of decision making” (Gerbaudo, this volume). Thus, social media become platforms where the communicative aspect of protests, riots and social movements can occur. Using Anonymous as a case study, Fuchs’ chapter in this volume shows how social movements can take on a bottom-up and amorphous organizational structure, to the extent that such movements can be considered social movements and anti-movements.

11. CONCLUSION

Politics in contemporary society is a force field of power involving the state, corporations, civil society and social movements in complex and contradictory relations. These articulations take place in the context of a global

crisis of society that is simultaneously economic, financial, political and ideological. Political transformations thereby tend to become accelerated. Their occurrence and outcome are, however, the result of the complexity and indeterminateness of human agency and social struggles, not predetermined. Social media is predominantly a corporate-state-power phenomenon, a force field in itself, in which powerful corporate and state interests are present and meet, as evidenced by the existence of a surveillance-industrial complex (PRISM) that controls social media communication and is constituted by a collaboration of social media and Internet companies, secret services and private security companies (such as Booz Allen Hamilton, for which Edward Snowden worked before his revelations). Corporate and state power are actually and potentially challenged and contested in multiple forms. The situation of the recent crisis has made such challenges more likely and taken on diverse formats such as revolutions, rebellions, protests, the emergence of growth of new social movements or parties (such as Occupy, Anonymous, the 5* movement, Golden Dawn), riots, etc. Social media are neither causes of these phenomena nor are they entirely unimportant. Rather, they are spaces of complex manifestations of power, counter-power and power contradictions. They tend to dialectically interact with offline and street politics (Fuchs 2014b, 2014d). Civil society politics challenges corporate and state power in various complex and non-determined political and social forms. These challenges make use of a variety of resources, including communication resources. Social media politics is thereby inherently shaped by an asymmetry of resources such as visibility, attention, money, reputation, influence and social relations that makes the communicational dimensions of struggles, just like offline struggles, those of an unequal power field, in which the state and corporations are privileged actors in terms of the power they can command, which results in a specific political economy that does not make it impossible to challenge state and corporate power, but rather a struggle with unequal resources (Fuchs and Sandoval 2015; Fuchs 2014b).

The character and outcome of the challenges to predominant political powers are not predetermined; they are not necessarily or automatically progressive, conservative, liberal, fascist, etc. Situations of crises are bifurcation points, in which the future is contingent and depends on the complex dynamics of social struggles:

The world of 2050 will be what we make it. This leaves full rein for our agency, for our commitment, and for our moral judgment. It also means that this period will be a time of terrible political struggle, because the stakes are much higher than in so-called normal times. (Wallerstein 1998, 64)

Our future is a matter of politics—for better or worse.

NOTES

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