Facebook Code
SNS Platform Affordances and Privacy

Prof. A. A. Adams

APSN 2nd International Conference
19-20 November 2012
Overview

- Cognitive Dissonance and Related Psychology
- Code as Law Protocol as Architecture
- Mixi and Facebook Changing Names
- Platform Provider Incentives
- User Incentives
- Privacy by Design
- Privacy by Default
Cognitive Dissonance and Related Psychology

- Cognitive Dissonance:
  One’s mental model of the world and the input from one’s senses disagree;
  Result: psychological pain

- Post-choice Bias:
  After making a choice (particularly one with some negative consequences) the decision-maker rationalises their preferences to fit the choice

- Group-think and Peer Effects:
  Even where there are no extrinsic benefits to a particular type of behaviour, people follow the norms of their peer group
Code as Law
(Protocol as Architecture)

- Lessig and Galloway: How we use computers and communications technology is limited and constrained by their protocols
- General purpose computing to some extent allows a free market
- Networked services are much more constrained to users (Facebook is closer to AOL than the Web)
- Most users don’t read terms and conditions and don’t understand computer’s backend capabilities
Mixi and Facebook
Changing Names and Japanese SNS

- Mixi was the dominant SNS in Japan until 2012, now overtaken by Facebook
- Mixi was by T&Cs, norms and protocol a pseudonymous site
- Other Japanese sites were actually anonymous, such as ni-chaneru
- Facebook has always had a so-called “Real Name” policy
- Interviews in 2009 in Japan indicated that users of Mixi preferred pseudonyms
- Group discussions in 2012 in Japan indicated that users of Facebook appreciated the benefits of Real Names spell-
Platform Provider Incentives

- If you’re not paying for the service, you’re the product being sold
- Facebook is jealous of their database and refuse to allow Google access (unlike, for example, academic publishers)
- Facebook is the portal to the World (Wide Web) for many
- Advertising revenue, app revenue, referrer revenue, marketing data revenue
- Facebook wants you to be (mostly) open
User Incentives

• He who dies with the most toys *friends* wins

• More information provides more feeling of connection

• Facebook filters friends’ views so that users don’t gain the visibility they think they do

• Filtering is necessary to prevent information overload

• Privacy, like reputation, is hard to maintain and, once lost, may never be re-achieved
Privacy by Design

- Minimise data collection
- Data Processing for a purpose, and only that purpose
- Consent trumps limitations
- Network effects trump informed consent (no service, no life)
- Changing defaults: new settings always to the platform operators benefit
- Privacy is hard to provide an interface for
Privacy by Default

- Default to closed, not open views
- Better presentation of privacy selections
- Take-back options enforced by law (Google must clear cached items; Wayback machine?)
- Positive acceptance of tagging only?
- Users are not their own enemy: user education is not the primary solution; economics, regulation, competition, new norms, new protocols