

"You Are the Product"

By Stefania Rimini

Collaboration: Paco Sannino

MARK ZUCKERBERG - FACEBOOK FOUNDER

At its inception, Facebook was based on a few very simple concepts. People want to share and connect with others around them. When people have control over what to share, they will become trusting enough to share more. The more people share, the more open and connected the world will become. And in a more open world, many of the biggest problems we all face will be easier to solve.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Put your private affairs out there, because it'll do the world good. But when you go looking for Facebook's people, they're not so keen to be found. The anonymous building in London near Carnaby Street, with its tiny little doorbell, make it hard to imagine that behind them lies a company which manages more than 500 million people's personal information. Thirty-something staff, riding their bike to work, a quiet working environment and a shredder in the corner for confidential documents. After a few public glitches, 26-year-old Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg doesn't much feel like making appearances on television and is foisting off on us a big gun who acts as his spokesman in Europe.

RICHARD ALLAN – FACEBOOK

We provide advertisers with the opportunity to target a specific group of users. For example, someone wanting access to males aged 18-40 living in Milan, because they want to sell them something they think might be of interest to them.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Google's German headquarters, more people riding their bike to work and other similarly lofty intentions. The Californian online search engine giant lives above a bakery near Munich's Marienplatz. Here, too, the young staff works in silence, with its stressballs within easy reach and its pockets full of the over 29 billion dollars in proceeds the company made in 2010. The idea is to pinpoint your interests and serve up a tailor-made ad.

ANDREAS TÜRK - GOOGLE

For example, if you go onto a weather forecast page, we know that you're interested in what the weather is like. And we know it because there's a Google code on that page which places the advertisements there. So we learn about the behavior during the surfing session and build a profile for that individual user... Not for the Google user, for the web browser..

WIELAND HOLFELDER – GOOGLE - OFFSCREEN

...No, no!

STEFANIA RIMINI

Is profile a bad word?

ANDREAS TÜRK – GOOGLE

Yes...

WIELAND HOLFELDER – GOOGLE

No, we don't build profiles with registered users' data.

STEFANIA RIMINI

But do you then sell the data to third parties?

ANDREAS TÜRK - GOOGLE

Obviously not, we don't sell anything to anyone.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

And what about Facebook? What does it do with the information users provide?

RICHARD ALLAN – FACEBOOK

Facebook does not sell users' personal data.

STEFANIA RIMINI

But do you draw up profiles?

RICHARD ALLAN – FACEBOOK

We don't need to; Facebook has profiles which the users have filled out themselves, of their own will.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Facebook doesn't need to build a file because each of its users builds his or her own and hands it over, and Facebook can use it to sell advertisements. Which is why each user has been estimated to be worth up to 100 dollars; therefore Facebook is arguably worth 50 billion dollars to its investors, who include Goldman Sachs bank but also Microsoft, Russian billionaire Yuri Milner and Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka Shing. That is who Facebook's 17 million Italian users are handing their personal profiles over to, with details such as their age, address, date of birth, gender, preferences and so forth, in exchange for thousands of free services, ranging from games to romantic dates. It's all pink and pretty, and free, but if you bother to read the terms and conditions, which hardly anybody does, what you'll find is that, indeed, you're not paying for the product... because you are the product.

MARISA MARRAFFINO - CYBER CRIME LAWYER

When you sign up to FB you're actually signing a real usage agreement. Facebook's managers have clearly worked on this, and have done their research, so yes, they can use the pictures but they can use everything, even the content of what you write.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Are we signing them over to them?

MARISA MARRAFFINO - CYBER CRIME LAWYER

Not only are we signing them over to them, but also to third party assignees, such as advertisers and people who can use and who do use our data for advertising purposes. But, at the same time, we are solely civilly and legally responsible for the content we publish on Facebook.

MILENA GABANELLI - STUDIO

Good evening. At a time in which people are obsessed with safeguarding their privacy, 500 million people, today, are publicly undressing, seduced by Facebook, which tells them, "everything which is on the website so as to enable you to embark on a social and personalized experience requires that you share a little bit about yourself". Meanwhile, founder Mark Zuckerberg has something like 7 billion dollars in his bank account. Google's founders, who are barely thirty years old, have also squirreled away about 15 billion dollars each. Let's just say that digital companies founded by young Californians are flourishing. Groupon is estimated to be worth 15 billion dollars, Twitter's value lies between 4 and 8 billion, Zynga's worth about 5 billion. In the last 3 months Facebook has gone from 50 to 85 billion dollars, and Russian tycoon Milner is investing truckloads of cash in Silicon Valley because "it's not about how much something's worth today, it's about what it will be worth tomorrow"; to be sure, according to Bloomberg estimates Facebook's earnings don't even add up to 2 billion dollars. It isn't really child's play, because anyone who invests will want to cash in on it. And in such a fast-paced world, it only takes a second for someone else to come into the picture and make a clean sweep. It already happened with Myspace, which was bought for 580 million dollars, and is barely selling for 50 now. What we'd like to know is how people manage to make so much money through Web 2.0, where users generate the content, which is then used by everyone out there. Over to Stefania Rimini.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Wikipedia is the prototypical democratic and unbiased web page, one of the world's top five most popular websites, the online encyclopaedia to whose content anyone can contribute and whose reliability is monitored by the users themselves.

FRIEDA BRIOSCHI – WIKIMEDIA ITALIA

Well, we hold a vote to appoint our managers and bureaucrats, and then votes are held on the pages in order to decide whether or not they should be deleted.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Can you give an example of which pages you've deleted?

FRIEDA BRIOSCHI – WIKIMEDIA ITALIA

All types, we delete a lot of biographies, for example those of people who have no encyclopaedic relevance.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Someone is always out there to check.

FRIEDA BRIOSCHI – WIKIMEDIA ITALIA

To keep an eye on everything that's going on.

STEFANIA RIMINI

On what other people have written?

FRIEDA BRIOSCHI – WIKIMEDIA ITALIA

Yes, of course.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Does Wikipedia accept advertisements?

FRIEDA BRIOSCHI – WIKIMEDIA ITALIA

Absolutely not.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So how does the whole thing survive financially?

FRIEDA BRIOSCHI – WIKIMEDIA ITALIA

Donations.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

16 million dollars in donations were collected last year, to enable it to continue to provide an independent and free service, of which there are several on the web. Some of the pioneers in this field include digital library Liber Liber, which publishes music and books which are in the public domain due to the fact that the writers or authors have been dead for over 70 years.

MARCO CALVO – LIBER LIBER

For example, this year Francis Scott Fitzgerald's work entered the public domain, and as far as Italians go, Vito Volterra for example, the mathematician who founded CNR [Italy's National Research Council].

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

We'll be able to download and share their work. "Download" and "share" are the catchphrases of today's world, on all social utilities from Facebook and YouTube to Twitter, Foursquare, LinkedIn and Diaspora... Nowadays there are dozens of these and even those people who were reluctant to are signing up now.

ELEONORA BONGIOVANNI

I was a little sceptical because, well, I find it a little difficult to share all my personal details, I mean, I'm not used to this sort of thing. But I did it and felt very pleased that I had, because I

managed to get back in touch with so many people who live all over the place: in the United States, South Africa, Australia, Mauritius, childhood friends with whom I was very close.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

There's even such a thing as "Facebook lessons".

GENTLEMAN

I apologise, I just wanted to ask you to clarify something for me: 'home' means my house, meaning all the friends I have in my house, right?

TEACHER

It stands for your main page.

GENTLEMAN

Because I can't find this guy, we used to go to school together and I can't find him.

TEACHER

Look for "friends" and "find friends".

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

You can send friend requests to other users and set up meetings with them.

LADY

I want to see someone but I don't want them to see it's me.

TEACHER

That's not possible.

LADY

Isn't it? He'll know it's me looking for him?

TEACHER

Yes.

MARISA MARRAFFINO - CYBER CRIME LAWYER

I have these two friends Giulia Spadoni and Lorenzo Mieri, they expressed appreciation for this initiative of mine and here I can choose whom to invite. With Facebook you needn't worry, because I have about 800 friends, in a matter of a couple of hours someone new turns up... so it's a way to share common interests, it's a way to share.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Sharing is easy on Facebook and also on YouTube, where single videos get a billion hits a month in Italy alone. And people end up sharing your stuff too, whether you like it or not.

CATERINA NAPOLITANI

Now we have a baby girl, like many new parents we feel the urge to share these really intimate videos with her grandparents, with our relatives and friends; YouTube has always seemed the easiest tool through which to do that.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

But aside from her grandparents, the video of the baby girl was also viewed by the entire audience of Italia 1's 'Nella rete di Jekyll' show, in which the video, which they had downloaded from YouTube, was broadcast.

CATERINA NAPOLITANI

Our baby's face was shown, they didn't blot the face out, you could hear the sound from the original recording in which her name was mentioned, and in case it wasn't quite clear enough the presenter even repeated it, so she was perfectly identifiable.

Video taken from 'Nella rete di Jekill'

"More cases of child abuse have emerged from the archives of telefono azzurro [Italian child abuse hotline], these ought to be "tinkerbells" rather than alarm bells, but this little girl's weight is very suspicious and triggers doubts as to what the future holds for her".

STEFANIA RIMINI

You never granted authorization for your little girl to be shown on television?

CATERINA NAPOLITANI

Absolutely not, I never would have given consent for her to be shown on television under normal circumstances, let alone when I found out how the video had been portrayed.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

The girl's parents filed a legal complaint, to which Mediaset's lawyers replied that the video had been taken from the Internet.

CATERINA NAPOLITANI

That it was a video which had already been published and that all they did was to simply show it again, without altering its content in any way.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

And is that true? Let's put the question to YouTube's owner, which, for those who didn't know, is Google.

STEFANIA RIMINI

When you upload a video onto YouTube, does that mean that it can be used by any old TV network?

MARCO PANCINI – GOOGLE

Absolutely not, and the videos can't be used without the consent of the people who have uploaded them.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Italia1 didn't hesitate to use videos posted on YouTube, meanwhile Mediaset claimed 500 million in damages from Google because people post 'Grande Fratello' [Italian version of Big Brother] videos on YouTube.

MARCO PANCINI - GOOGLE

Some people say that we, as in YouTube, should be able to monitor this content ahead of time...

STEFANIA RIMINI

To notice that it's from Mediaset ...

MARCO PANCINI - GOOGLE

Notice that it's a Mediaset video and therefore prevent this content from being viewed by YouTube users.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Is there a way for you to view what people intend to upload ahead of time?

MARCO PANCINI - GOOGLE

No, it technically isn't possible.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Yet, according to Milan's public prosecutor's office, they have had the technical means since 2006, when they launched the Google Video service in Italy, on which some boys from Turin posted a video showing a schoolboy being bullied.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Was the video on the web for long?

LEONARDO CASATI - VIVIDOWN ASSOCIATION [ADVOCACY GROUP FOR PEOPLE WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME]

It stayed up for at least two months and was among the most viewed videos. But it was a video in which this poor boy, who actually didn't even have Down's Syndrome, was being bullied by his classmates, who were throwing things at him, saying nasty things, insulting him even, so you see...

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

They told us, "we can't screen the videos ahead of time, we took the video down as soon as we were notified".

GUIDO CAMERA – CRIMINAL LAWYER

Actually, according to the Public Prosecutor's office they had all the means to screen the videos before they were posted, they did screen them and surely did so for advertising purposes and when they had to take down the video the chief of police from the communications department had to intervene, and the Ministry of Public Education nearly had to jump in, along with all the country's newspapers, for the video to be taken down.

STEFANIA RIMINI

The judge saw this, and is that why he decided to indict them in the end?

GUIDO CAMERA – CRIMINAL LAWYER

He found against them as a result of another aspect, i.e. for violating privacy laws and profiting from it.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

The three Google executives were handed six-month prison sentences and the company set up a more expedient screening system.

MARCO PANCINI – GOOGLE

All videos about which we're notified get physically checked by someone who verifies the content.

STEFANIA RIMINI

There's a guy there who actually bothers to watch the videos...

MARCO PANCINI – GOOGLE

Exactly, he makes sure the video in question falls foul of our regulations and the video is then removed.

MILENA GABANELLI - STUDIO

The Milan verdict was spoken about all over the world, because it just wasn't right. People cried censorship, saying the judges wanted to force Google to filter its content, like publishers do, which is impossible due to the simple fact that neither Google nor YouTube are publishers. But what they should have said, and the real reason for the sentencing, was that they should inform users that when they publish a video of such and such, such and such needs to authorize it. Anyway, compared to YouTube, which only publishes videos, Facebook takes exposure to an even higher level, you publish to share and the more you share, the more people click and the more people join, and the greater the value of the website. Everyone has caught the Clicking bug: 12 million Italians of all ages are on it every day.

LADY

We're proving that even grandparents can learn to use the Internet, even if they're 92 years old, like I am.

PASQUALE SANNINO

Congratulations. So you have an e-mail address, a Facebook profile, you have all that?

LADY

Yeah yeah. I have my own file on the computer, "grandma Mimma life portrait" and it contains everything I've written about the life I've lived, from my childhood up until now.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Compared to YouTube, Facebook takes things to another level, because people bare themselves there and the material can be used by the company for advertising purposes. Facebook is a cash cow, as became apparent to Tommaso, a Politics student who manages to pay his rent thanks to Facebook.

TOMMASO PARLATORE

I manage Facebook pages and Facebook profiles on behalf of companies or, let's say, different entities, ranging from holiday villages to famous public or political figures who want to be present on the social network.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

And then Tommaso creates ad insertion campaigns on Facebook. Say we want to insert a generic "watch 'Report'" ad. But we also want to exclusively target an audience of female singles.

TOMMASO PARLATORE

It comes up with all the women and tells me I can send this ad to 6 million, 700 thousand women in Italy.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Say we only want to target women who are already interested in topical talk shows, such as 'Annozero' or 'Presadiretta'.

TOMMASO PARLATORE

That will narrow it down for me significantly. By adding 'Presadiretta' I got 150 thousand people who like both things.

STEFANIA RIMINI

And can I add other criteria?

TOMMASO PARLATORE

You can add more criteria, you can choose whether you want women interested in men or in women. For example, it came up with 4,140 people who say they like 'Annozero', 'Presadiretta' and are interested in women.

STEFANIA RIMINI

And these are women sexually oriented toward other women?

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Let's select the place of work, as well.

TOMMASO PARLATORE

For example, if we insert RAI, who knows what's going to come out. RAI Radio televisione Italiana. There are fewer than 20 people who claim to be women who like women who...

STEFANIA RIMINI

Watch 'Annozero', 'Presadiretta' and 'Report', are single and work for RAI.

TOMMASO PARLATORE

Exactly.

STEFANIA RIMINI

But there are 20 of them, so I can reach those 20 people in an extremely targeted fashion.

TOMMASO PARLATORE

Extremely targeted.

STEFANIA RIMINI

And at that point, what would it cost me?

TOMMASO PARLATORE

It would hardly cost you anything, 6 cents for every 1,000 views.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

And it isn't over, because then Facebook even shows you how many people are clicking on your ad based on age and gender, and even location. You tell it who you are, and it will tell you what you want.

STEFANIA RIMINI

And which preferences of yours did you make public?

TOMMASO PARLATORE

No, probably the fact that I listed several newspapers that can be perceived as, how can I put this, left-wing, such as 'Repubblica', 'Il Fatto Quotidiano', or even 'Blob', stuff like that, they think I vote for the Left... and they're right.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

So Facebook can even deduce who you'll be voting for, because you yourself give it that information every time you "like" something.

TOMMASO PARLATORE

For example, this here, which is a shoe brand. All you have to do is go on a Facebook page and click on "like", and this information automatically gets added to your profile, and it can be used by companies to send you targeted ads. Then of course you have all types of categories of interests, you could also add books or games.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Is this out-and-out profiling?

TOMMASO PARLATORE

It is profiling.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

On the one hand, Zuckerberg and his partners use your face and your name to recommend products to your friends. On the other, the Palo Alto billionaire enabled a small group of people living in the remote Ferrarese countryside to have collected 12 thousand euros in order to finish their local oratory's flooring, because it turned out that almost all of the town's youth were on Facebook.

STEFANIA AGAROSSO – ORATORIO GHISILIERI ASSOCIATION

All these kids were clicking on "like". By clicking on "like" they helped me. So if at first we were on the third page of Google's search results, we slowly climbed to the second page, then to the first page, and then, little by little, our association was listed in the first results.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Still, you have to work hard to get something to appear [on Google]...

STEFANIA AGAROSSO – ORATORIO GHISILIERI ASSOCIATION

It's based on meritocracy.

STEFANIA RIMINI

On meritocracy?

STEFANIA AGAROSSO – ORATORIO GHISILIERI ASSOCIATION

Very much so, democracy and meritocracy. But that's an opportunity that both Facebook and Google give you.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

If you manage to place yourself among the first sites listed by Google, you have the opportunity to earn money by hosting contextual advertising tool AdSense on your website.

ROBIN GOOD – ONLINE EDITOR

It's crazy, I've earned over 1 million dollars from Google for these ads between 2005 and now.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Just by allowing Google to place targeted ads on your website?

ROBIN GOOD – ONLINE EDITOR

Yes.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

You can check how much people are earning him on an hourly basis by clicking on the ads that Google sends to his page.

ROBIN GOOD – ONLINE EDITOR

If I scroll through this, and look at the breakdown, for example I can see that up until this moment, in the space of a couple of hours the ads were viewed about 8 thousand times, some people clicked on the ads and earned me, with these 163 clicks, about 30 euros for now. Now, I don't know how happy Google is with this, you'll be interviewing them later, they're not happy with this information being seen, they don't want it to be visible, especially, not ever, in detail, like I'm showing you.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Because, if Google has paid him alone almost a million, how much will it have kept for itself? Up until a few months ago, this information wasn't available. But then Italy's FIEG [Italian Federation of Newspaper and Periodical Publishers] turned the matter over to the Antitrust authority, which forced Google to disclose its revenue split, i.e. 32%. Aside from that, there is a whole market for people who want to bend the rules.

ROBIN GOOD – ONLINE EDITOR

Text Link brokers is a service which allows you to buy all the links you want from whichever website you want, however much you want, on whatever you want.

STEFANIA RIMINI

A stock market on which to buy and sell links and climb higher in the search results?

ROBIN GOOD – ONLINE EDITOR

Exactly.

STEFANIA RIMINI

And make more money?

ROBIN GOOD – ONLINE EDITOR

Potentially.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

But Google has its own ways of finding people who are getting paid to sell links or people who are clicking on their own advertisements.

STEFANIA RIMINI

If someone misbehaves do you kick them out?

MARCO PANCINI – GOOGLE

If someone misbehaves we do kick them out. Meaning that if someone is misbehaving, i.e. creating content which is linked to a few key words in a surreptitious manner, but with the sole aim of climbing higher in the list, without providing users with useful information, then they are deservedly punished for this underhand behavior.

STEFANIA RIMINI

To what page had you been relegated?

ROBIN GOOD – ONLINE EDITOR

999th

STEFANIA RIMINI

Oh, so you were really impossible to find.

ROBIN GOOD – ONLINE EDITOR

Right.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Out of the blue?

ROBIN GOOD – ONLINE EDITOR

Yes.

STEFANIA RIMINI

You asked Google why and they didn't answer you?

ROBIN GOOD – ONLINE EDITOR

No, they didn't. For example, I have an account manager provided to me by Google who from time to time warns me: look, our monitoring office has notified us that you have a problem. I'm like, "OK, but what problem might that be?". I can't tell you but you need to fix it. That's what the monitoring office told us - you have 48 hours.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

How can we be so dependent on Google? Nowadays anyone who has a blog, a website, any company at all with some sort of digital presence, cannot detach its fate from the algorithms dreamt up by Mountain View engineers, which enable other people to find you in the online universe, even in real time, by making even a single sentence someone, somewhere in the world, might have said about you when speaking to someone else 1 minute ago, pop up. And it's not just Google that does this, there are several types of software which can be used for "web listening".

VALERIA SEVERINI – WEB LISTENING EXPERT

These new web listening tools allow you to listen in clearly on all the public conversations which take place on different web channels, namely online media, social networks, microblogging platforms, wikis, forums, blogs.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Companies have us monitored and they build databases, then if they notice that people are nostalgic for authentic beauty, they'll post a video like this one on YouTube, which then goes viral, and gets viewed by 1 million people.

ALEX GIORDANO – DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHER

Once this ad comes out, what happens, well, the friend who spoke to his friend and said authentic beauty no longer exists, and that everyone has had work done, they will very likely send it to one another. You copy the YouTube link, you send it and say, you see, this brand thinks like we do! And that's how the word of mouth process is triggered, in which consumers

are somehow being used, and are therefore creating value for the brand.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

This meter tells us that right now the number of brands being mentioned and recommended by Twitter users amounts to 16-17 million. Twitter, for those who weren't aware, is a social network to which 227 million people have signed up. It's a service which enables you to transmit your tweets, brief text post, to all your followers.

DONATO CARRIERO – ONLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPERT

I follow 1,200 people and am followed by 2,400, which is a lot, but I've seen worse.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

It's thanks to Twitter that people in Egypt were able to communicate with the rest of the world even when Mubarak blocked all Internet access. If, instead, you want to let all your friends know the cafe in which you're having a coffee, and the best place to buy fish, you can use Foursquare, another social networking service which geo-locates you using your mobile phone.

STEFANIA RIMINI

It says there are 3 friends there, with two other people.

DONATO CARRIERO – ONLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPERT

Yes.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Les Bains, that's the name of the place they're at?

DONATO CARRIERO – ONLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPERT

Yes, exactly.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Having checked himself in at RAI on Via Teulada, Donato is told by Foursquare that a person named Ilenia is also there, and that she has 11 friends, of whom one is a friend they have in common.

DONATO CARRIERO – ONLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPERT

And his name is Stefano.

STEFANIA RIMINI

You know who that is?

DONATO CARRIERO – ONLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPERT

Yes.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So Stefano knows Ilenia, so if you want to meet Ilenia you can ask Stefano?

DONATO CARRIERO – ONLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPERT

Yeah, but now we're minding other people's...

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

We're minding other people's business or rather, as sweatshirt-clad Californians would say, we're connecting, which sounds more technological. Geo-location is merely the latest marketing frontier and can be used for other purposes, such as reporting potholes. Web 2.0, where the content is user-generated, has so much to offer. But to whom are Italians entrusting this content? At the end of the day, half of them are entrusting it to Facebook.

CARLO INFANTE – PERFORMING MEDIA PROFESSOR

We cannot leave things at the mercy of automatic systems such as Facebook, which is a

massive centrifuge and, like all good centrifuges, throws around a lot of information. But the automatic nature of it implies that you're not thinking about what you're doing.

STEFANIA RIMINI

And what's the risk here?

CARLO INFANTE – PERFORMING MEDIA PROFESSOR

The risk is acquiescence, meaning that you slip into things and we risk living in a world which is other-directed, i.e. run by other people.

MILENA GABANELLI - STUDIO

While our public lives are being managed by dinosaurs, our private ones are other-directed by twenty-something computer experts? It would appear so. However, in the information era, information is gold, handled by private and global entities, but it plays an almost public role, because if you're not listed on Google who's going to be able to find you? Who's going to know who you are? And Google operates worldwide, but it's headquartered in the United States, and in the USA data belong to those who have them, and they can legally sell every little detail about you and your family to third parties. In Europe, though, data still belong to you, but what happens if that global entity misuses the data? What happens is that in the Czech Republic, for example, Google's Street View service, the one which takes pictures of public roads, inadvertently captured data from users who were connected to Wi-Fi networks, and was told, "bye, go home". But what does Google know about us?

ANDREAS TÜRK – GOOGLE

If you want to know what data we have on you as a registered user, i.e. "what Google knows about you", go to Google.com's dashboard page. You'll see a list of all the products you've used on Google, such as Blogger, Books, Buzz, Gmail, YouTube, Moderator...

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

My relationships network pops up, along with the people I speak to most often, videos and pictures, some of which I downloaded years ago, hotels at which I've stayed, maps of the addresses to which I've been, the topics I've researched, the websites I've been to and what I've clicked on in the last 7 days, or even as long as 3 years ago. If a stranger were to gain access to this, they would be able to form a very accurate profile, just like Google has, after all.

WIELAND HOLFELDER - GOOGLE

No, no. The information you see on the dashboard is only put together at that very moment, and just for you, and you're accessing it with a double security level.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Fine, but since Google is a U.S. company, an American judge's order, let's say it was requested by an Italian rogatory letter, could compel them to disclose that snapshot, which comprises a detailed file on my behavior. Basically, the tool exists, we're just hoping no one misuses it. For the time being, we're being told by Munich that unless you're a registered user, Google doesn't know your identity.

ANDREAS TÜRK – GOOGLE

We only gather anonymous information on our servers. So, for example, we can see what you've searched for through Google, but only as far as the computer and browser go, we don't identify the person behind the computer screen.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

It's all automatic even insofar as Gmail's e-mail service is concerned.

WIELAND HOLFELDER – GOOGLE

We extract key words for advertising, but in a wholly anonymous fashion. No one is reading your e-mail.

STEFANIA RIMINI

But does anyone from Google have the ability to see and listen to my video-calls? Is it possible, technically speaking?

WIELAND HOLFELDER – GOOGLE

Technically, there are people who need to perform system maintenance who could, theoretically, access the video-call. There are very few of these people, they need authorization and are closely monitored. Also, Gmail uses https for its connections, so it's secure.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Secure as it might be, a user from Genoa's Gmail account was hacked into.

MARCO BORGHELLO

They hacked in, took over my account and sent an e-mail to all my contacts, "I am writing this with tears in my eyes. My family and I went to Cardiff, in Wales, for a quick holiday. Our credit cards and mobile phones were stolen. Please, we need you to send us a little money, so that we might make arrangements and go home".

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Fortunately your friends didn't send any money, because the account was immediately blocked.

MARCO BORGHELLO

Google did it, it had noticed suspicious activity.

PASQUALE SANNINO

Did you ever find out how they managed to access your e-mail?

MARCO BORGHELLO

Yes, my password was incredibly weak.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

If they manage to access protected connections, imagine what they can do with unprotected ones. Anyone can do it with the Firesheep application.

FABRIZIO BUGLI – I.T. SECURITY EXPERT

I get an extra icon, as though it were part of my Favorites, and when I click on it I'm automatically taken to the post of the person I'm spying on, as him or her.

PASQUALE SANNINO

I'm that very user?

FABRIZIO BUGLI – I.T. SECURITY EXPERT

I'm that user, yes!

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Firesheep was created to raise awareness among Internet service providers as to the need to use more secure mechanisms, such as the exchange of https certificates. Now we're going to show you how easy it is to steal a Twitter user's identity.

FABRIZIO BUGLI – I.T. SECURITY EXPERT

For example, here, now I'm in another browser and I'm simulating the existence of another person or another computer which is logging in. Right now I'm doing this to myself because it's illegal. So someone on this side logs in. Let's call this person the victim user. The attacker sees that another person with that username is logged in to the same social network.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Now all the attacker has to do is click on that button to start capturing the Internet traffic, copying what he/she needs and there it is, they're connected to Twitter as though they were

the victim user. From then on they can send messages to all of that person's contacts, and Twitter isn't the only service with that bug.

FABRIZIO BUGLI – I.T. SECURITY EXPERT

Amazon, Foursquare, Google, Facebook, Yahoo, Windows Live, Tumbler.. those are the best known ones. Some of these have taken care of the bug, others haven't..

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Google and Foursquare took care of the issue by forcing users to connect securely using https, while Facebook has left https as an option. Why?

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

Because it can cause side effects. For example, it might be harder to run some applications, so we're taking it easy because we want to make sure everything works properly.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

They probably also want to make sure they don't miss out on that 30% which all those Facebook applications funnel into their profits. And as for the users... they can take care of themselves.

WOMAN

It's like when we used to go to the oratory, you used to go to the oratory, right? You would talk to the nun, you'd talk to her and you might say, "don't tell anyone". You'd know that within a week the entire town would know, for sure. It was an old-fashioned version of Facebook. Sorry, but...

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

But the nun didn't cause you to end up in court, whereas with Facebook it's a possibility.

MARISA MARRAFFINO - CYBER CRIME LAWYER

In Monza a guy was sentenced to 15,000 euros in compensation payments for defaming his girlfriend on the Internet, more specifically by posting a comment on Facebook.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Because if you insult your boyfriend on Facebook, the judge says you've insulted him in front of millions of people.

MARISA MARRAFFINO - CYBER CRIME LAWYER

Millions of people. You may potentially have insulted him in front of 500 million people throughout the world.

STEFANIA RIMINI

There have already been convictions...

MARISA MARRAFFINO - CYBER CRIME LAWYER

There have already been convictions...

STEFANIA RIMINI

In Italy?

MARISA MARRAFFINO - CYBER CRIME LAWYER

In Italy, there have been a few settlements which came close to six months in jail, for crimes which range from defamation to impersonation, which is another crime that's very often committed by minors.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So a girl wrote to you and sent you a friend request?

GIRL

Yes, I thought I knew her because her name sounded familiar, it was a common name, a really typical Tuscan name. So I added her.

STEFANIA RIMINI

To your friends.

GIRL

Yes, and a few weeks later I noticed this girl had stolen my pictures and was using them as her profile pictures.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Oh, so she was pretending to be you?

GIRL

Yes. And, well, I reported her because Facebook gives you that option, and nothing happened. The girl found out she'd been found out and blocked me, so I can no longer see her page, and that was that.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

If you press charges against that girl, she could be sentenced to a year in prison. And then there's the whole picture issue on Facebook. You can't publish pictures of people on your page without their consent.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Have you ever published pictures of your friends on your Facebook page?

GIRL

Yes.

STEFANIA RIMINI

And did you ask them for permission ahead of time?

GIRL

No.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Have you published pictures of your friends on Facebook?

GIRL

No.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Did you ask them for permission?

GIRL

No.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Read the contract terms?

GIRL

No.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Published pictures?

GIRL

Yes, I have.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Asked your friends for permission?

GIRL

No. Absolutely not.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Read the contract terms?

GIRL

No.

STEFANIA RIMINI

If someone just goes to a birthday party where nothing out of the ordinary happens but they don't feel like having their picture published because they don't look good in the picture or... a bit of a trivial reason... but regardless, can the person who published the picture be found guilty anyway?

MARISA MARRAFFINO - CYBER CRIME LAWYER

At the very least they can be sentenced to pay damages, they also risk getting up to 3 years for aggravated defamation.

STEFANIA RIMINI - OFFSCREEN

Therefore parents who go to work and leave their child at home unattended need to know that they are responsible when that child goes on Facebook.

STEFANIA RIMINI

The kids who defamed the janitor, calling her a "bastard", how much did they end up paying?

MARISA MARRAFFINO - CYBER CRIME LAWYER

In that case, two thousand euros a head.

MILENA GABANELLI - STUDIO

People have even been fired for writing that they didn't like their boss or the company they were working for. It's already happened in Italy, in the USA, in England. And that's one issue. There's also the fact that Facebook isn't just a community, as the term which is loaded with noble values implies, but rather a Silicon valley company which will soon be a public company, therefore thirsty for exponential growth and revenue sources, which don't only consist of the advertisements that you get sent to your wall, but also those you're paying for out of your own pocket.

When you sign up to a social network – nowadays almost a billion people have joined one - you don't pay anything. So the companies in question need to convert this enthusiastic show of support into revenue if they want to get anywhere. How? By sharing... users' information with a few hundred thousand applications, from horoscopes to games. The minimum age requirement for Facebook is 13.

STEFANIA RIMINI

How old are you?

LORENZO MADISON

Almost 13.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Do you go on Facebook?

LORENZO MADISON

Yes, a lot.

STEFANIA RIMINI

How much is a lot?

LORENZO MADISON

I sometimes have it open 3 hours a day, but I'm not always on the same page. When I have Facebook open, I'll be looking at other things as well, opening new windows, and when someone sends me an instant message I hear the little ping and I know someone wants to chat with me.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Do you play any games?

LORENZO MADISON

I play Backyard Monsters. The good thing about Facebook is that it's all online, and also other Internet games you can play with other gamers in real time.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Even with people on the other side of the world sometimes.

LORENZO MADISON

Yes.

STEFANIA RIMINI

But it's fun, right?

LORENZO MADISON

Yes, yes, very!

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

It's fun, but it's still a California company which will one day be publicly traded and, in January, Facebook announced that it would be giving users' mobile phone numbers and home addresses to the developers of the thousands of applications on the website, and there's a risk that they may be able to find out exactly who you are.

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

All we said was that, if they wanted to, users could share their mobile phone number and address with the applications they wanted to use, but that it would be entirely up to them. They could say, "I don't want to give out my phone number, I won't install the application".

STEFANIA RIMINI

Don't you think a thirteen-year-old kid could end up giving out his home address and mobile phone number to someone with less-than-noble intentions?

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

This scheme, this function rather, is currently being reviewed because we want to make sure we're doing things properly.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

And this isn't the first time, like for example in 2009 when they said they were going to keep users' data forever, even after their accounts are deactivated. Users complained and Zuckerberg backed down, meanwhile he gives it a try and let's see what happens. Like with the games: they're free to begin with; then what?

ANNA PALAIA

It's free, but you get to a certain point in the game where if you don't have any credit you can't do certain things. This is CityVille, the latest big thing apparently. These are community buildings, and I have them because I'm on the 56th Level, but I don't have these ones here because they're at the 60th Level. If I want to finish building the fire station I need all of these things and here we have coins and paper money. You want to buy City Cash? It gives you the price in euros: 1.45 euros buy you 20 credits which you can buy using PayPal, all the different

credit cards or using your mobile phone.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Every game has its own virtual currency: on CityVille it's City Cash. On FarmVille you take your shovel, you start digging and you go buy all your stuff with FarmVille cash. On Backyard Monsters you need Shinys. On Mafia Wars if you want your Mafia family to carry weapons you can buy a gun, a fake ID, an assault rifle. And that takes you to the online shop which belongs to the company which created all these games, Zynga. At the end of the day it's real money, credit cards and so forth.

ANNA PALAIA

I see that some of my friends, Facebook users, have gotten to some really high levels, and think that you either spend all day on there or you need to make a purchase of that sort.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

After that, Mark Zuckerberg holds on to 30% of the profits, while the rest goes to the people who invested in the applications you find on Facebook, such as the Zoosk dating service, which pulled in 90 million dollars last year alone.

GIANCARLO TONTI – WEBMASTER

Virtually it's free, but in reality everything surrounding it has an economic value, simply due to the fact that, once you're in, the system tells you, "look, we need to access your data in order to enable that option...". When you try to access it, you're told that your information will be used. More specifically, this service benefits from those colored buttons, because you're paying to send that young lady a message. If you want to send these virtual gifts, the little flower icon, you need to pay for them with credits: 25 credits for the teddy bear, 15 for the heart-shaped chocolate box, 20 for the bottle of wine...

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

And while you're busy sending teddy bears and buying sheep, other people are buying and selling your name, surname, preferences and friends list. Your details are the real treasure and, as a matter of fact, it came out that Zynga's games such as FarmVille, FrontierVille, Mafia Wars, Treasure Isle - but also the quizzes and several other Facebook applications- were sending their users' names to other companies on the outside, companies which put together profiles and sell them to advertising companies.

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

When we found out, we took active steps right away to make it clear to the application developers what exactly our restrictions consist of.

STEFANIA RIMINI

But aren't there several thousand external developers?

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

Yes exactly, there are a lot of external developers...

STEFANIA RIMINI

Then how can you be sure that one of them isn't selling user data to third parties?

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

Clearly, only the really successful applications have access to a great bulk of personal data, because an application can only access that data once a user has installed it.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

So not that many applications have been installed by several millions of people. We work closely with those applications' developers.

So they only have control over the more popular services, such as the 250 which have more than 1 million registered users. But users can find a total of 550 thousand services on Facebook. All it takes is for any one of my friends to install a rogue application out of the

500,000 unchecked ones and, in some cases, it'll be able to snatch my details, as well as my friend's. It's enough to catch the Italian Data Protection Authority's eye, but the problem is that Facebook's headquarters are in the USA.

LUIGI MONTUORI – DATA PROTECTION AUTHORITY

There is an ongoing dialogue, at the European level, with these people on the other side of the pond, so as to convince them to try to find shared rules.

STEFANIA RIMINI

But can't we fine them?

LUIGI MONTUORI – DATA PROTECTION AUTHORITY

No... not from the sanctions standpoint.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Not only is our privacy at stake, but also security itself.

LADY

I don't want my grandchildren going on Facebook, even if my daughter keeps telling me, "there are privacy [norms]..."

STEFANIA RIMINI

We're protected...

LADY

We're not 100% protected.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So then you were already on Facebook?

LADY

Yes, I had been for some time and I removed myself because one day when I opened my page I noticed that an American company, selling diet products of all things, had sent its ads to my friends as though I used those products. And as if I was telling them to use them, too. And I thought, "damn, how do they do that? And how did this company manage to get into my profile and send things out?". This happened 15 days ago.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

They probably used the so-called "likejacking" technique, thus named because it uses the "like" button Facebook users can click when they visit Internet websites.

VANJA SVAJČER - VIRUS RESEARCHER

You click on something, but there's hidden content within the website. The hidden content launches the "like" function on Facebook, so that as soon as you "like" something it posts it on your wall and on your friends' walls, as well. Your friends might think that if you like that product, they might like it, too. And they'll go to that same page. And that's how the malignant attack spreads throughout the entire social network.

WALTER NARISONI - I.T SECURITY EXPERT

There have been instances of phishing linked, for example, to Facebook, Twitter, eBay and so on. So what happens? The attacker sends an e-mail telling the person that they absolutely have to log in to their account because something has happened, and provides the link with which they are to access their own account.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Except that when this person logs in, they're letting in a virus which will steal their internet banking password.

WALTER NARISONI - I.T SECURITY EXPERT

This is usually done using a keylogger, an application which logs your keystrokes.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Therefore a very dangerous one?

WALTER NARISONI - I.T SECURITY EXPERT

Absolutely.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

It happened to a user from Varese, who had to call in an I.T. technician because his Facebook profile was suddenly in Romanian. Someone hacked into his account, changed the settings and was asking other people to be his friends, passing himself off as the original user.

DAVIDE RUOCCO – I.T. CONSULTANT

Essentially, everything that was typed into or inserted into web pages, such as the online banking page or Facebook, in this case, was being sent to these Romanian servers, without the user's knowledge.

STEFANIA RIMINI

What had he done?

DAVIDE RUOCCO – I.T. CONSULTANT

Basically he'd clicked on a link a friend of his had posted on his wall... And in trying to visit the website his friend had posted on his wall he'd caught this nasty thing, this backdoor trojan.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Backdoor trojans consist of malicious applications which turn your computer into a zombie appliance which can be operated remotely, for example to conduct a political campaign, as was the case here, this was sent to civil servants.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Perhaps this message was sent by someone next door without them realizing it?

MARCO D'ELIA - SOPHOS ITALIA

Without them knowing.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Because their computer was being accessed remotely.

MARCO D'ELIA - SOPHOS ITALIA

Because their computer was being accessed remotely. That's exactly what a "botnet" is: in the Internet world there are networks of connected computers which can be considered invisible.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So in this case here, how many computers might be sending out this e-mail?

MARCO D'ELIA - SOPHOS ITALIA

Thousands.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

That's why we constantly receive phishing e-mails, like those which target Poste Italiane clients.

MIMMA DI MARCO

The very second I got my Internet connection running...

STEFANIA RIMINI

What happened?

MIMMA DI MARCO

From that moment on it's been a nightmare. Every morning you'd receive two, even three letters, asking you to access your account by entering your details. If you allow yourself to get distracted for even a second, you click without thinking....

STEFANIA RIMINI

And they'll steal everything.

MIMMA DI MARCO

They'll steal everything there is to steal.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Sophos labs in London find 1 new infected sample every second. This is a cross-section of all the spam that's been flying across Italy in the last ten minutes. This part shows us what's in the message and from which IP address it's being sent.

VANJA SVAJČER – VIRUS RESEARCHER

The red dots represent an individual computer which is creating or sending spam messages. Ninety percent of the spam we detect comes from infected computers, so...

STEFANIA RIMINI

Private households?

VANJA SVAJČER – VIRUS RESEARCHER

Private households, mostly.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Of which the residents know nothing?

VANJA SVAJČER – VIRUS RESEARCHER

No. And the reason spammers use home computers is that it's harder to block private users' IP addresses.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

This Russian criminal is selling 400 thousand passwords and user names from PayPal, eBay, Amazon, Facebook, Twitter and bank accounts. Price: 30 dollars for 1 Megabyte, 50 dollars for 2 Mega. There's a whole black market that revolves around malware, so they try to make money by infecting your computer to send spam or even to spy on you.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So you'd bought credit with which to make phone calls on Skype?

OMAR FARDIN

Exactly. And someone got into my account and didn't use my credit card details directly, but rather chose to activate the Auto-Recharge option which allows you to recharge your account automatically with 25 euros when your balance falls below 2 euros... and keep spending money on phone calls.

Then I saw a whole bunch of phone calls to Uganda, to Senegal on the call log.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

He lost 35 euros, while another Skype user in Rome lost 100 euros.

ALESSANDRO BROGANI

I therefore decided to write to Skype. I told them, "but I've been scammed... and it looks like it was at your hand, because the money was credited to one of your accounts in London." They always gave me very evasive answers, saying that I should take certain security precautions... The moral of the story being that they had nothing to do with the whole thing and didn't want to shoulder any of the responsibility.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

And then you get all these other people spamming you just because they don't care, and they send you their ads whether you like it or not. Riccardo has about a dozen e-mail addresses and he wastes hours separating unwanted e-mails from useful ones, and thus decided to fight it to the last spam e-mail.

STEFANIA RIMINI

How many lawsuits did you file?

RICCARDO BIONDI

For the time being, two suits in which sentences have been issued.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Did they rule in your favor or against you?

RICCARDO BIONDI

In my favor.

STEFANIA RIMINI

How much do these companies usually pay when they lose?

RICCARDO BIONDI

200 euros... just like they might pay out 1,500, or 2,000. But anyway... for the time being I've lost out.

STEFANIA RIMINI

In any case, now you're not going to let them slip a single one past you... so to speak.

RICCARDO BIONDI

No, now I'm not letting them slip a single one past me. There's a law that needs to be complied with. I don't see why I need to respect the law and others don't.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

And what does the law state?

DIEGO FULCO - LAWYER AT THE ITALIAN INSTITUTE FOR PRIVACY

The law states that if someone wants to send someone else promotional e-mails, they need to let them know beforehand and ask for consent.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So when I put my e-mail address up on the Internet, for whatever reason, they can take it and use it to send me newsletters?

DIEGO FULCO - LAWYER AT THE ITALIAN INSTITUTE FOR PRIVACY

No. Because what's in the public domain isn't public for the purposes of data privacy laws.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Just one example of the thousands that are out there: this print shop sent us its unsolicited advertisements. Let's see what kind of excuse they come up with.

PASQUALE SANNINO

We wanted to know why you have this e-mail address of ours?

WOMAN

No, I don't know; why, is it a secret e-mail?

PASQUALE SANNINO

No... because I mean, did you obtain consent from this person? To send her e-mails?

WOMAN

I don't know, I have no idea about that. Tell me her name and we can take her off the list if needs be.

PASQUALE SANNINO

Stefania Rimini.

WOMAN

Because yeah, often you might send out e-mails as advertisements. But there's no hidden purpose to it.

PASQUALE SANNINO

Do you all do this? Find people's e-mails on the Internet and then...

WOMAN

I think so, because there's nothing wrong with it, I don't think. I have no idea, though.

STEFANIA RIMINI

What might they be up against here?

DIEGO FULCO - LAWYER AT THE ITALIAN INSTITUTE FOR PRIVACY

Some very hefty fines.

STEFANIA RIMINI

How much does the company have to pay?

DIEGO FULCO - LAWYER AT THE ITALIAN INSTITUTE FOR PRIVACY

20 thousand euros.

PASQUALE SANNINO

I mean, it's not the best of practices. That's what I wanted to tell you. Because you should get prior consent. Do you understand? I think you do. Unless they're in the public domain. It doesn't matter because it isn't...

RICCARDO BIONDI

I mean... it would be so easy if the data protection authority did its job...

STEFANIA RIMINI

Do you sanction them? Does that happen?

LUIGI MONTUORI - DATA PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Yes, yes, it happens. All you have to do is notify us and in most cases we'll intervene.

MILENA GABANELLI - STUDIO

Great, so now we can all start reporting the industrial quantities of spam that we receive in our inboxes. So the authority can solve the country's unemployment problem, too. NASA's advice to avoid any unpleasant surprises: don't use the same password to access your e-mail, Facebook, your online banking account, but rather have different passwords, make them long, with at least four types of characters, including letters, numbers, upper case and lower case. To remember them you can use free programs which encrypt them for you. So use a little caution. Going back to Facebook; if it were a state, it would be the third most highly populated state in the world, with its own rules, which are laid out in the contract you sign when you register, the list of rights and obligations, and its own surveillance unit, which makes decisions. Such as kicking you out, for example.

STEFANIA RIMINI - OFFSCREEN

In Zuckerberg's and his partners' realm you have to do as they say, otherwise their invisible yet efficient police kicks you out of the community. But how do they make that type of decision? Is it enough for someone to report you?

STEFANIA RIMINI

But if enough people get together they could have me thrown out by reporting me en masse, even if I've done nothing wrong....

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

Yes... But our decisions aren't arbitrary, every report is assessed, regardless of whether there's just one or there are thousands of them, that doesn't matter. What's important to us is whether or not the content violates our regulations. And there's a multilingual team working here in our European offices, with people who speak Italian, too, and are able to judge the content with "local insight".

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Do you think "local insight" is an anthropological, sociological or a political concept? We're not sure, but it does look, to some users, like it works, especially when it comes to pictures and videos to do with the Italian government.

MARCELLO PARI

I was ousted from Facebook about a year and a half ago.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Why?

MARCELLO PARI

To begin with I was posting some links on videos from YouTube, footage of the Prime Minister and so forth, which were systematically removed from both Facebook and YouTube.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Did you write any insults?

MARCELLO PARI

No, no insults. I've never liked insulting people, nor encouraging violence. But after I did that I was kicked out.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Have you signed agreements with Italy's authorities for you to monitor what users say on Facebook?

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

No, we haven't signed agreements with any authorities anywhere for that sort of surveillance. We want our users to be able to speak freely, even meaty discussions on current affairs are welcome.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

But do current affairs also include discussions against the Gelmini decree? Because a student from the University of Florence, who was running a Facebook group, she was kicked out right after she sent other students a kit which informed them as to the details of the protest.

EGLE RADOGNA

It happened suddenly, as soon as I pressed "send" the system kicked me out.

STEFANIA RIMINI

But why?

EGLE RADOGNA

I asked myself the same thing. That same day there was a message in my inbox saying that

there had been "suspicious activity" on my Facebook account, on my wall.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Do you have any idea what that might have been?

EGLE RADOGNA

None whatsoever.

STEFANIA RIMINI

You mean you never found out?

EGLE RADOGNA

No.

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

"Suspicious activity" could mean that someone accessed your account from abroad. Or, usually, it refers to the user having addressed others in an unpleasant manner. We therefore need to take steps to protect other people.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

In your case, Facebook asked you for your telephone number to confirm your identity.

EGLE RADOGNA

And it was an ultimatum...

STEFANIA RIMINI

Meaning...

EGLE RADOGNA

That if I didn't give them my mobile phone number I couldn't regain access to my account.

STEFANIA RIMINI

And did you give them your mobile phone number?

EGLE RADOGNA

Absolutely not, because I considered it to be a breach of my privacy. I asked myself what right a social network has to ask me for my mobile phone number.

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

Obviously with an Italian cell phone we can verify that the user to whom we are about to send the code with which to regain account access is actually a user in Italy and not someone who has accessed the account from an entirely different country.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Meanwhile, though, these users and countless others have been deprived of their control over their thoughts, pictures, conversations and interactions they had been sharing with the community. Whether rightly or wrongly, nobody knows except Facebook's employees with their local insight. Users just have to trust them. Just as Google users have to trust that files are not being put together on them. It's the price we must pay in this century if we want to be "social".

MARK ZUCKERBERG – FACEBOOK FOUNDER

We are moving toward a Net where sociality constitutes the norm. Every application and every product will be designed and built to use people's and their friends' real identity.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

If virtual life is to end in a scenario such as that described by Zuckerberg, then virtual suicide is a preferable option, at least according to two Italian artists and programmers, who called their project 'Seppukoo', as in when samurai traditionally committed suicide to save their

honor in death.

LES LIENS INVISIBLES – NET ARTIST

Virtual suicide, one of the possible options is to go back to living anonymously online, so as not to have to exhibit your life and personal information so ostentatiously...

STEFANIA RIMINI

In fact, you would delete all of it.

LES LIENS INVISIBLES – NET ARTIST

Yes.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So you basically managed to trigger a viral mechanism, the same one used by Facebook.

LES LIENS INVISIBLES – NET ARTIST

Yes, in the sense that every time someone committed virtual suicide, they would let all their contacts know and send them an invitation.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

In the space of a month and a half the virtual suicide toll reached 20 thousand. At that point Facebook's lawyers ordered them to cut it out.

LES LIENS INVISIBLES – NET ARTIST

We exposed Facebook from that point of view...

STEFANIA RIMINI

With regards to what?

LES LIENS INVISIBLES – NET ARTIST

To the fact that, after all, it isn't as democratic a company as it would like us to believe. When their interests are at risk they don't hesitate to block any type of information, freedom of expression and even block words, as we saw in our case.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Can you block individual words?

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

No, we don't try to block individual words on a large scale; it wouldn't work in the majority of cases...

STEFANIA RIMINI

Meaning?

RICHARD ALLAN - FACEBOOK

We don't try to block individual words on a large scale, there are some very specific sectors where we can try to do this, but only when it is clearly in the public interest.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Let's test this. Let's type in "Seppukoo.com" on Facebook... the message won't even be sent because it's been labelled "offensive content".

LES LIENS INVISIBLES – NET ARTIST

Seeing as all our communications are going through there, they have the ability to block any inconvenient word at any point in time. Also because it would be interesting to find out who Facebook's investors are, there are investors with a political agenda, who have not acted on it yet.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Facebook's investors are American venture capitalists, Goldman Sachs bank, Microsoft, tycoon Li Ka Shing, who also owns 3 Italia, and Russian oligarch Yuri Milner. With their blessing, Facebook aims to become your secure web portal.

MARK ZUCKERBERG – FACEBOOK FOUNDER

I just turned 26 a few days ago. When I look back to when Facebook started, I'm amazed at how it's evolved and by how many of you are using it to stay connected throughout the world. I would therefore like to thank you all for having contributed to making all this possible. You have truly created a global movement. All of you have made Facebook what it is today.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

But hackers believe your digital identity is something too valuable for you to be entrusting it to private companies which need to turn a profit and which are potentially not immune to government interest; governments are increasingly active on the Internet nowadays.

LES LIENS INVISIBLES – NET ARTIST

After we published a project of ours, a few days later it was blacked out by the communications police.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So since then you began to keep your servers abroad?

LES LIENS INVISIBLES – NET ARTIST

Yes. It's just that the slightest amount of pressure from whomever happens to be in power in Italy is enough for them to black you out.

MILENA GABANELLI – STUDIO

In their own way, the two young Italian programmers made a splash internationally, for having launched an upside-down Facebook. The difference being that they didn't get rich, they got a Cease and Desist letter and their website was shut down. But this provocation probably helped make Facebook management more aware, and now they allow anyone who wishes to do so to disappear from the server. In any case, the Internet isn't as free a world as one might think. But we've been analyzing the concept of freedom for 2,000 years. What we can't deny is that there is always an urge to censor. And let's talk about Internet piracy; the party may be over for eMule, Megavideo and Torrent lovers. Soon.

Democracy and freedom of expression are fundamental concepts for the Internet. There are 17 million Italians on Facebook, but if you don't trust the way information is managed, you can always decide not to join and to communicate online through other means. What Italian nationals may not be able to do, however, is access a website they're interested in because someone has said, "This violates my copyright, it needs to be removed". Across Europe, music, book and movie pirates are punished, based on laws passed by parliaments. We don't have any such law and we think we can solve the problem by placing it in the hands of the media authority.

ANTONIO BENDINI – VIDEO SHOP OWNER

Pirated files are uploaded onto this website, and they're then connected to links. So people who have the website put the link on this one, so the responsibility falls on Megavideo. Megavideo is in Hong Kong, so no one intervenes. And this is Checco Zalone's movie.

This will only come out in four months' time here. But even just on Megavideo, this isn't the only file. So even if they were to delete that specific one, there's sure to already be another one out there, maybe two, or even ten of them. Now, how can this be? In a matter of seconds I can watch a movie which I still don't have in stock because it will be coming out next week, and no one does anything. The copyright authority does nothing to stop it.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

It's possible because Italy still has the same copyright laws which Mussolini passed in '41.

ALESSANDRO BOTTONI - SECRETARY OF THE PIRATE PARTY OF ITALY

Nowadays, with the laws currently in force in Italy, if you download a song off the Internet and

you make it available to other people, using peer-to-peer networks, theoretically you could end up in jail.

STEFANIA RIMINI

For how long?

ALESSANDRO BOTTONI - SECRETARY OF THE PIRATE PARTY OF ITALY

Up to four years, which is really a lot. Suffice it to say that the punishment for rape is softer than that for file sharing.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Instead of drafting a law which moves with the times, they just let piracy go unpunished and no one protects the middle-man, because looting has become the norm.

ANTONIO BENDINI – VIDEO SHOP OWNER

I pay my taxes, I exist. I need to be able to provide a service, and when I do, I should be afforded the same safeguards as any other shop owner.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Instead, it seems to us that the big fish are being safeguarded, but not the smaller ones, like you.

ANTONIO BENDINI – VIDEO SHOP OWNER

Phone companies are safeguarded, all the time. But phone companies are the first ones to provide specific services. ADSL, broadband and more... Cubo Vision, and Alice on TV. They're the first to want to provide on-demand programs. But they're not the only ones, Google will also be showing movies, with YouTube.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Pay-per-view, on-demand movies.

ANTONIO BENDINI – VIDEO SHOP OWNER

Exactly.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So what you're saying is, Internet pirates aren't the ones who are edging us out, it's Telecom, Apple, Medusa, RAI...?

ANTONIO BENDINI – VIDEO SHOP OWNER

Exactly. These pirates, they really think they're fighting this great battle, that they've created a free web, they think they have so much, and that they're free. But they're actually being used by big groups for what will one day be the future.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

The future is here: it's no coincidence that now that Mediaset is set to offer movie streaming on Mediaset Premium and Warner will be doing the same thing on Facebook, which falls foul of the principle of free exchange, the Media Authority is getting ready to pounce.

STEFANIA RIMINI

Would eMule and Torrentz, from which people download loads of movies and music and so forth, also be shut down?

FULVIO SARZANA – LAWYER SPECIALIZING IN NEW TECHNOLOGY LAW

Official proceedings are underway for those types of websites.

STEFANIA RIMINI

You mean to make them inaccessible?

FULVIO SARZANA – LAWYER SPECIALIZING IN NEW TECHNOLOGY LAW

That's the aim.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

But even a blog which makes reference to an article in the news could find that that portion of the text has been blacked out if someone has stepped forward to say that that article is covered by copyright.

FULVIO SARZANA – LAWYER SPECIALIZING IN NEW TECHNOLOGY LAW

If someone were to be accused of that in such a case, then that part would get deleted, and then the citizen would be tasked with finding a judge... at his/her own expense... etc..

STEFANIA RIMINI

How long do they have to decide whether something should be deleted?

FULVIO SARZANA – LAWYER SPECIALIZING IN NEW TECHNOLOGY LAW

Five days. As far as Italian websites go, there's what we call selective removal, meaning the files might be deleted after 5 days. But as for foreign websites which contain files which are copyright protected, they would simply no longer be available to Italian users.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Hearings are underway and even within AGCOM some people have reservations with regards to this system.

NICOLA D'ANGELO – ITALIAN MEDIA AUTHORITY COMMISSIONER

The deletion process should involve the legal authority. Now, leaving that to an administrative authority, which is what AGCOM is at the end of the day, is a problem, this is a very delicate issue. For now it's just a hypothetical, we'll have to wait and see how it ends up in the definitive regulations. Also, who's to say whether an entire website - not an individual file, which is paradoxically easier to assess - but a whole website, is dedicated to piracy? Who is in charge of verifying that? It gets really complicated.

STEFANIA RIMINI

That would be your competence.

NICOLA D'ANGELO – ITALIAN MEDIA AUTHORITY COMMISSIONER

It would be our competence. Which, to be honest, I find... I'm entirely against it.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

Technically, AGCOM would have to ask service providers like Tiscali, Telecom and others to pave the way for them to reach piracy websites. So the real burden of the operation would fall on the companies which take data packets and transfer them from one place to another which, at that point, would have to find the means to scan and screen everything that goes through them.

STEFANIA RIMINI

What does that mean, reading what people are writing?

DINO BORTOLOTTO - ASSOPROVIDER CHAIRMAN

Absolutely, it's as though you were carrying out interceptions 24 hours a day, indiscriminately, on any citizen.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So 24/7.

DINO BORTOLOTTO - ASSOPROVIDER CHAIRMAN

Yes, of course! Any message that passes through...

STEFANIA RIMINI

And you're the ones who ought to be doing it.

DINO BORTOLOTTO - ASSOPROVIDER CHAIRMAN

It's what copyright owners want.

STEFANIA RIMINI – OFFSCREEN

So if you think about it, all someone needs to do is raise their hand and say, "my copyright has been violated" and as though by magic, hundreds of websites would no longer be available in Italy, which is what happened with ThePirateBay. Having said that, there are always ways around censorship, such as Tor.

MARCO CALAMARI – WINSTON SMITH PROJECT

Tor, which is an application, comprises a network of several thousands of relays spread throughout the world. When I connect to any website at all, through Tor, I'm actually exiting my provider, and connecting via the first available node Tor can find. My dataflow bounces off a network of Tor nodes, three most of the time, and exits through the last one, which is usually located abroad. So, right now I'm connected to another country's provider, see now I'm exiting through the United States, from Saint Louis. By exiting through another country I'm able to circumvent Italian censorship.

STEFANIA RIMINI

So from there I can view what would otherwise be restricted in Italy?

MARCO CALAMARI – WINSTON SMITH PROJECT

Exactly, and I can easily connect to ThePirateBay.

MILENA GABANELLI – STUDIO

Firstly I would like to clarify something: "analyzing the content of data packets" does not mean that human beings are sitting there, reading what you've written- it's machines that scan billions of words to extract what they're looking for from the web. Having said that, some fear that what's happening now in Italy goes far beyond the ban on illegally downloading music, books or movies – because the decisions are made by an administrative authority, which acts on the reports it receives, and which it may receive for example from a politician who doesn't like you and therefore blacks you out. According to hackers, and not crackers (I.T. criminals), the end justifies the means: freedom of expression is an absolute principle, and in the name of that principle we must publish everything and remain anonymous. WikiLeaks, the most talked-about website on the planet, has been doing it for years. Its founder, Assange, is under house arrest and soldier Bradley Manning, who was arrested just over a year ago, may be facing the death penalty for treason... he has been accused of leaking several files to WikiLeaks, including the following one.

TAKEN FROM "WIKIREBELS"

JULIAN ASSANGE

Every time we release material that sends out a second message: we are setting an example. If you have anything to do with unjust, immoral practices, you will be found out, it will come to light and you will pay the consequences.

SPEAKER

Perhaps this is the type of rationale which led a young ex-hacker to make the most important decision of his life. Bradley Manning, working in Iraq as a U.S. army intelligence analyst in early 2010, just like millions of other U.S. soldiers or civil servants, had access to an enormous archive of confidential information. At some point he found evidence of crimes and corruption and discussed the matter with another hacker, Adrian Lamo.

BRADLEY MANNING

If you had free access to confidential information and you saw incredible, horrible things, what would you do?

ADRIAN LAMO

That depends. Give me a few details.

BRADLEY MANNING

Well, it's all been forwarded to WikiLeaks. To some crazy guy with white hair. I've really done it now.

SPEAKER

This was the biggest leak in intelligence in history. This is seen from the perspective of the crew on a U.S. helicopter while on combat patrol in Baghdad. Two of the civilians gunned down worked for Reuters international news agency: driver Saeed Chmagh and cameraman Namir Noor-Eldeen.

MAN - HELICOPTER

See all those people standing down there?

Hotel Two-Six, this is Crazy Horse One-Eight. We have individuals with weapons. Light 'em all up. Come on, fire. Keep shooting.

JULIAN ASSANGE

Everything else aside, regardless of whether you think it was right for the USA to be in Iraq, of whether it was right for them to be in that neighborhood at that time, in a helicopter, hovering over that injured man who was dragging himself up the street... The fact that that injured, crawling man was shot didn't help the United States.

MAN - HELICOPTER

We got one guy crawling down there. We're shooting some more.

SPEAKER

The Reuters employee, Saeed Chmagh, had been severely injured.

CONVERSATION ON THE HELICOPTER

Does he have a weapon in his hand?

No, I haven't seen one yet.

Bushmaster; Crazyhorse. We have individuals going to the scene, looks like possibly picking up bodies and weapons.

Can I shoot?

Picking up the wounded?

Request permission to engage. Come on, let us shoot!

SPEAKER

A father who was taking his children to school saw the wounded man and stopped to help him.

CONVERSATION ON THE HELICOPTER

This is Bushmaster Seven. Go ahead.

Roger. We have a black SUV Bongo truck picking up the bodies.

Request permission to engage.

This is Bushmaster Seven, roger. Engage.

One-eight, engage. Come on!

Clear.

SPEAKER

Publishing sensitive material can be very risky.

MICHAEL MULLEN - U.S. ARMY JOINT CHIEF OF STAFF

Mr Assange can say whatever he likes about the greater good he thinks he and his source are doing, but the truth is they might already have on their hands the blood of some young soldier or that of an Afghan family.

JULIAN ASSANGE

We would've had to release all this material without separating out any of it, or release none. The extraordinary value of this historic record to the progress of this war and its potential to save lives outweighs the danger to innocents.

SPEAKER

This time, though, the U.S. embassies' secret cables contain revelations whose repercussions are even harder to assess.

MILENA GABANELLI - STUDIO

Thousands of documents were released by WikiLeaks, some of which had to do with Ambassador Thorne's cable regarding the Romani bill on safeguarding copyright and states, "The bill is troubling as it appears to have been written to give the government enough leeway to block or censor any Internet content, furthermore this bill would set precedents that nations such as China could copy or cite as justification for their own crackdowns on free speech. Though AGCOM is theoretically an independent agency, many fear that it may not be strong enough to resist political pressure". These were Ambassador Thorne's comments regarding Italy's Communications Authority, this is what came out.

Well, last October we dedicated an episode to the financial maneuver geared toward fixing Italy's public finances, and documented what we believed to be critical aspects, seeing as this is a DocuReportage. We invited and urged the minister to talk to us several times, all in vain. After which Minister Tremonti expressed the belief that we did not act in the spirit of information pluralism and asked AGCOM to intervene and sanction RAI. A few days ago the Authority decided that we had not made any false statements nor had we defamed anyone, yet it ruled that RAI must broadcast another episode in which positive opinions and accounts regarding the Minister's financial measures are to be heard, with a view to restoring the principles of objectiveness and thoroughness. In case of non-compliance, the Authority will apply the foreseen measures, i.e. sanctions. Therefore the right to criticize can be exercised, so long as it goes hand in hand with praise. Say measures of the same sort were to be applied in cases where there is only praise and no criticism, because that falls foul of the principle of information pluralism. I think article 21 of the constitution exists in order to guarantee us the opportunity to freely exercise our right to criticize, the right to information, freedom of expression. Therefore I believe that there could and should be an appeal against these measures. I know that that is RAI 3's stance. I would like to seize the opportunity, rather, to once again ask the Minister to agree to an interview with us, so that we may redress the balance. 'Report' will end June 12 so he has two months' time; let's hope he accepts. And now let's continue the story we began last week about our food industry.