

The Problem of Privacy in Capitalism and the Alternative Social Networking Site Diaspora*

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Social Networking Sites
in the Surveillance Society

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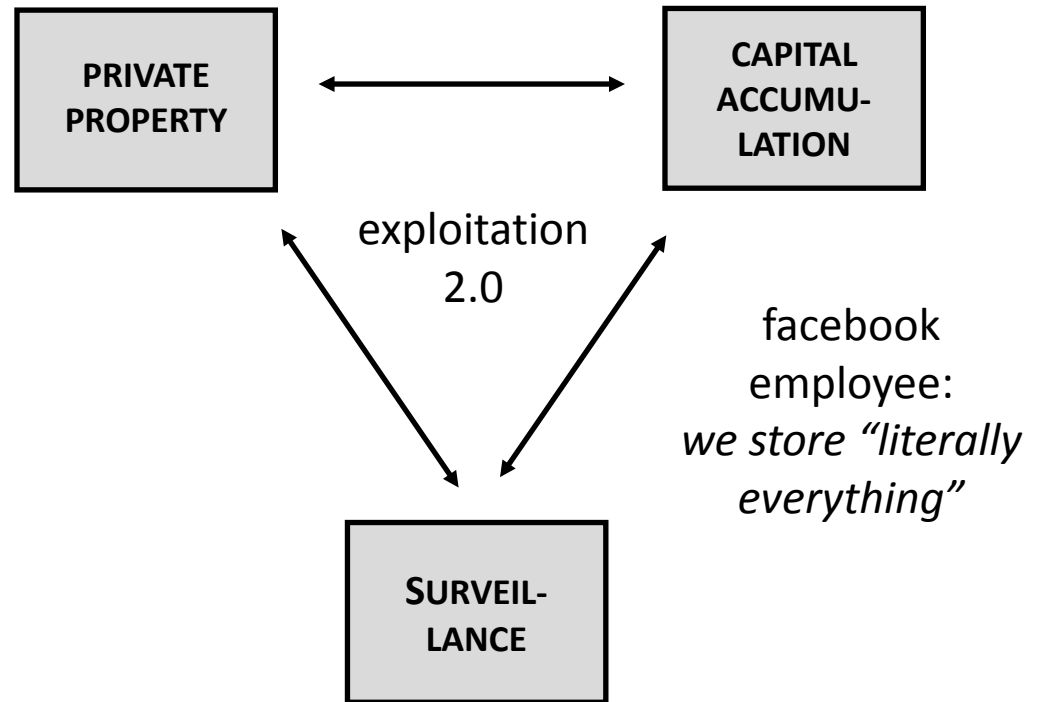


overall aims of the presentation:

- to investigate the alternative, privacy aware social networking site Diaspora* from a Marxist standpoint.
- analysing the concept of privacy critically
- to propose a view that sees the claim for privacy not as challenging commercial SNS's business model radically and therefore cannot overcome reasons for user surveillance and exploitation ultimately

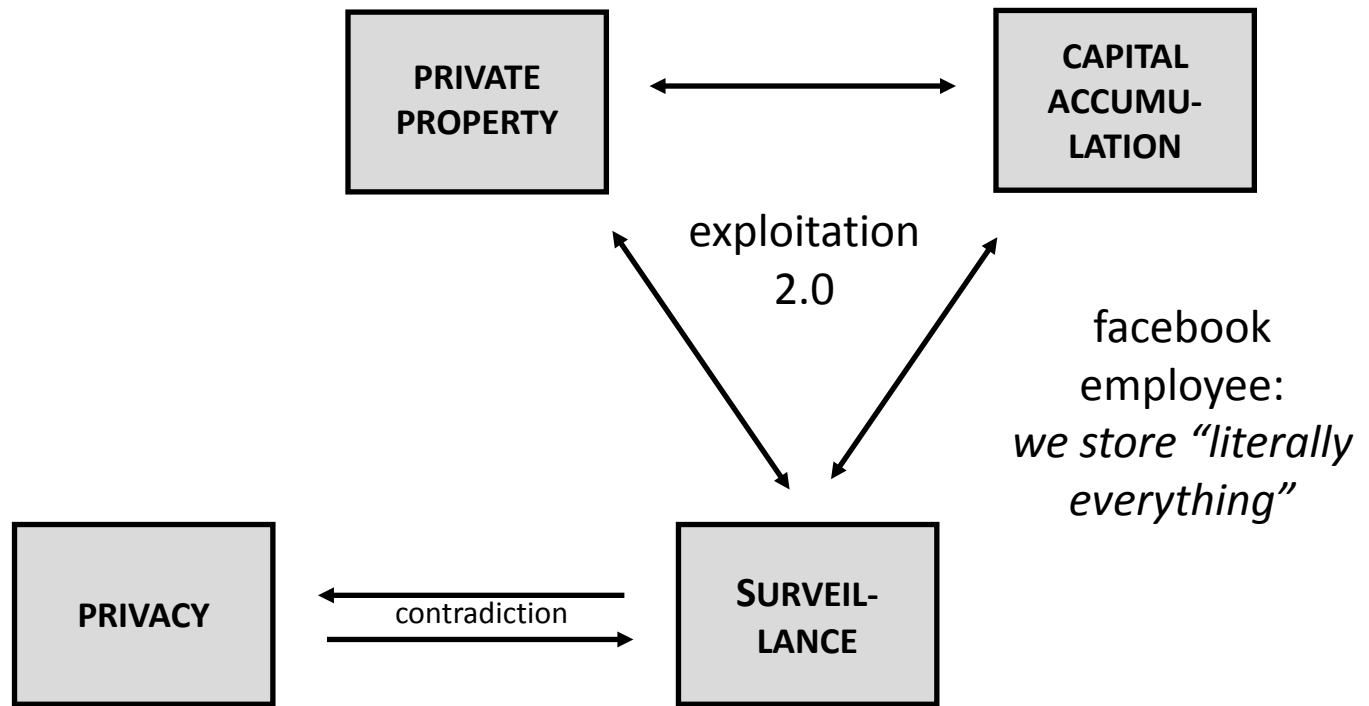


political economy analysis of the privacy crisis on SNS:





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Social Networking Sites
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Diaspora* - de-commodification of the software and personal data

THE
DIASPORA*
PROJECT

- peer-production
- free software: copy left
- distributed design



“Our distributed design means *no big corporation will ever control Diaspora.* *Diaspora will never sell your social life to advertisers,* and you won’t have to conform to someone’s arbitrary rules or look over your shoulder before you speak” (Diaspora 2011c).



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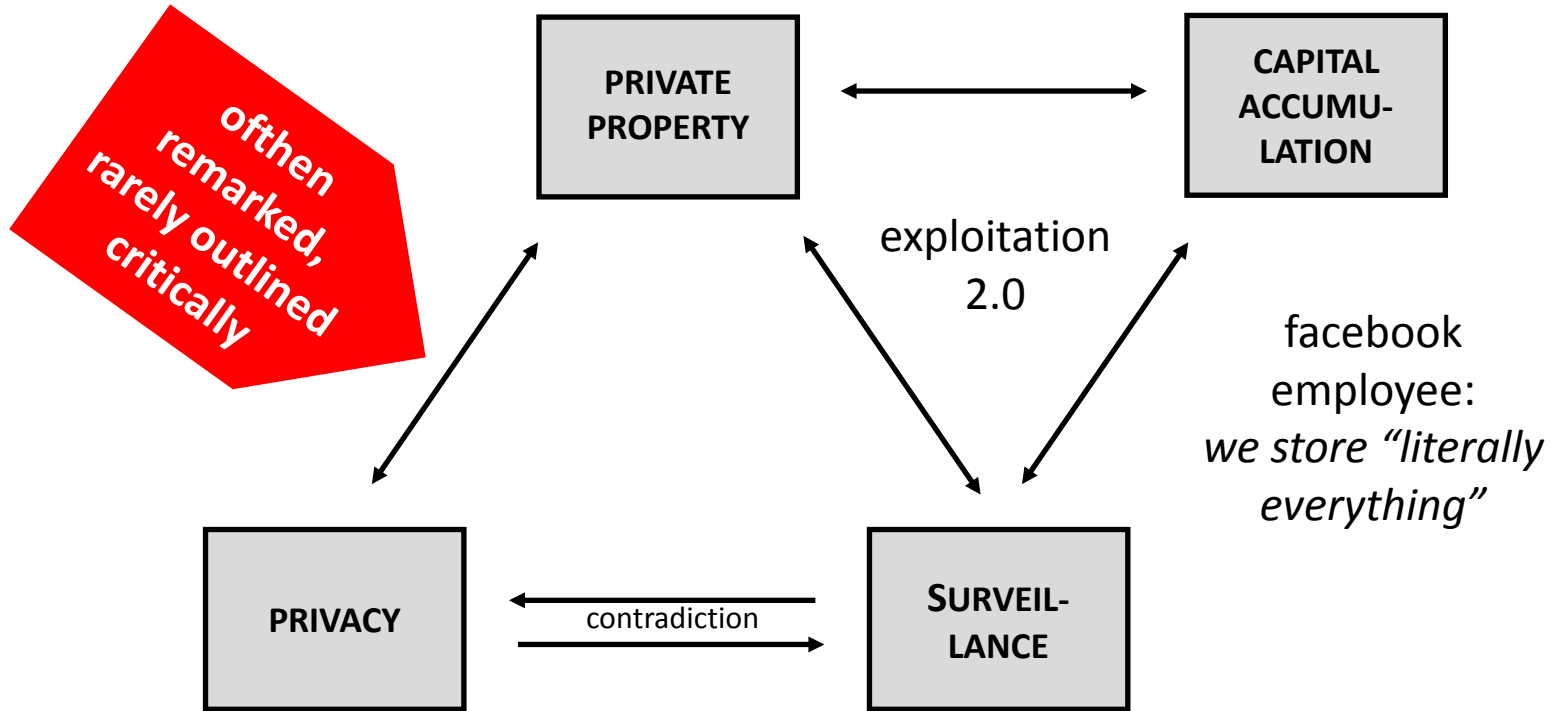
Diaspora* - the privacy aware social network



Diaspora “is the social network that puts *you in control of your information*. You decide what you’d like to share, and with whom. *You retain full ownership of all your information*, including friend lists, messages, photos, and profile details” (Diaspora* n.d.b).



extend the political economy analysis of the privacy crisis on SNS
also to alternatives:





dominant theories of privacy: individual control, exclusion, and private property

dominant philosophical thinking: possessive individualism

Possessive individualism denotes a kind of thinking *and* a social practice. Within capitalism it is useful and necessary that the individual perceives herself or himself as essentially “*the proprietor of his own person and capacities, for which he owes nothing to society*” and enters “*into self-interested relations with other individuals*” (Macpherson 1962, 263).

dominant disposition of thinking as it is given by the practice of commodity exchange: mutual recognition as private property owners

“the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, let us say of labour power, are determined only by their own free will. They contract as free persons, who are equal before the law. Their contract is the final result in which their joint will finds a common legal expression. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple Owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to his own advantage. The only force bringing them together, and putting them into relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interest of each. Each pays heed to himself only, and no one worries about the others” (Marx 1867/1976, 280).



why is the dominant privacy discourse problematic? why can we call it an ideological discourse?

one answer: IT RELATES TO EXPLOITATION

- **freedom and privacy rights originate from the mutual recognition of private property and personal data owners**
- **but such freedom and privacy does not contradict exploitation at all: selling personal data to advertisers**
- **users have a “double freedom”: free to sell their privacy and free from the means to determine what happens with their privacy**



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Social Networking Sites
in the Surveillance Society

and Diaspora* ...?

practical de-
commodification of privacy
through Diaspora*'s mode
of production



privacy as property justifies
commodification and
exploitation ideologically

users are NOT free of the means
of production

users are free to sell their privacy
on markets

...at the same time

MAKES NO SENSE (except the alternative mode of production
should remain limited and ready to be serve for capital
accumulation indirectly or later in time)



consequences:

practical de-commodification of privacy through alternative modes of production



Rethinking privacy!

social conception of individuality; privacy as a social license; de-entangled from private property

Diaspora* de-commodifies privacy and this has anti-capitalist potential; at the same time one should not allow the privacy discourse entering into thinking about alternative SNSs mindlessly because privacy is not a neutral battlefield.