

## Understanding Media by Understanding Google by อนุญัตน์ ปังเส็ง

Note: These are probably **not** in chronological order.

### NEWS MEDIA:

I think that using face search on the news media should be considered **UNACCEPTABLE** without the authorization of the persons who are shown in the picture. News media should be allowed to use that only if before they ask for permission to the persons or the families of the persons involved (in case they are dead). That is to preserve privacy and anonymity of the individuals, which I consider one of the most important things in modern society. Everyone should be free to choose if to share his photos publicly or not.



### EXAMPLE:

In July, in the city where I live, which is Padova, in Italy, a young girl aged 16, who was a friend of mine and who had got several serious problems with her family, committed suicide. This was a very sad story, but I want to write about it here because I consider it a shocking example of **UNACCEPTABLE** use of social media and individual photos. An hour after the suicide, many local media websites reported the news, and they all put into the news the complete name of her and even a photo taken from her facebook profile (the cover photo, which is public on fb), without asking permission to the family of her... This made the news spread very fast and the mother of this girl started to receive many calls after the publication of these articles. I cannot imagine how much she suffered in that moment, so she asked someone to contact the websites and politely ask at least to remove the photo and the name. After another hour the websites accepted, fortunately, but in those 2 hours many people had seen it... I consider this one a shocking example of violation of privacy and anonymity without consent. And this is unacceptable!

### GOVERNMENT USE:

Even if I won't give any real example of government use of face search, my opinion about it is slightly different from the news media one. In fact, I consider that using face search in government investigations must be considered **ACCEPTABLE**. It is something that helps the society and that can prevent crime or dangerous situations, so it is very important to allow authorities to use it. Moreover, this doesn't necessarily violate anonymity, because the data are used only by the government, and only in case of danger. So, basically, if you are a good citizen, you will not have to worry about privacy violation!

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Teenagers write on a wall of Arezzo's Fortezza. A tourist takes a picture of the writers and send it to the police. The policemen search their faces on Facebook and send the girls to the prosecutor. It happened in Italy, last November, 13. This is acceptable? The police searched the faces browsing Facebook profiles. Policemen didn't use a software, but they use a social network. In the future detectives will use an algorithm to identify teenagers? It will be acceptable? The answer lies in the purpose: if the purpose will be acceptable, the search will be also. Face recognition is a tool.

May, 12 2012, Brindisi (Italy). A bomb killed a girl and injured another teenager. Magazines searched faces and published them. It was acceptable? This was freedom of press? The girl published her photo with a different purpose, she couldn't imagine the future use (neither her death), but this image was an essential part of story. Acceptable use. She was underage: unacceptable use. Again: if the purpose will be acceptable, the search will be also. Face recognition is a tool.

Other side of issue: privacy is a tool also. Everyone can set the appropriate level of privacy, if platform allows it.

But government's face search among low level of privacy (or public) images is acceptable when its purpose is accumulating information, connect them each other, creating a profile of the people? The answer doesn't lie in the purpose of search, but in the purpose of database. So, this is unacceptable in a political system with a Big Brother, it's less unacceptable in a democratic system. But when a system is democratic? According Karl Popper, when citizens have the power to control those who govern. Face search of government is acceptable when citizens have the power to control the right and acceptable use: security, fight against crime , public safety. What about press face search? What about journalists' accumulating information, connecting them each other, creating a profile of the people? The answer is similar: it lies in the purpose of database. If they make this in order to to satisfy the right to information , within the law , it is acceptable. If they use it for other purposes is not acceptable.

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Google explains in the "Company overview" (<http://www.google.com/about/company>) section of its website that their mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. Google Books project sounds like another one of the company's attempts to create a better world — along the lines of self-driving cars; tiny drones that can deliver packages by hovering high above the ground; helium balloons to beam 3G internet access to remote parts of the world; unmanned flying turbines; and Google Glass, as Burkeman listed as examples in his article *Death, drones and driverless cars: how Google wants to control our lives* (<http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/sep/22/what-does-google-want-glass-drones-self-driving-cars>). Google's intention to digitize all the world's books is a good thing and does not endanger anyone. Unquestionably the project is good for Google. Google gets more content, content is bringing in users keeping them busy with searching (and searching pays the bills). The project provided an opportunity for

libraries to increase the pace with which they can digitize their collections (now even the Vatican is working on digitization and made available online some of the world's most unique and important texts from their collections). Even more important, is that the information in books, can be changed, and updated. Publishers, once dominant players in the book business, now struggling to remain competitive, can become better at selling their own digital content (Google is providing them with a digital copy of books). Readers get to search for books and buy them more easily (this is good for authors also). This will increase the potential for research (and researcher) and broader understanding of some books and authors. Ultimately, the project is good for books and future generations, as the books are often fragile due to their age and condition. For me, this project is not about books, but about informations found in them and they belong to the public. We all have the right of access to informations and books should be digitized so that informations within them are available to people around the world. But nothing is quite like a book and the role the book plays is different from what we can get from our phones or computers. People continue to cherish books and want them in their hands and in their homes not on their screens.

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Youtube changed the way people perceive video content. Before Youtube there weren't many options if you wanted to watch a video online. In today's world where time is the most valuable resource 3-minute videos are in the winning position.

Youtube has a valuable impact on areas in which people operate on a daily basis - politics, culture and news. Russia is definitely among those counties which undergo this impact with politics being the most influenced area and news coming second.

For example, Youtube was widely used by Russian citizens during the recent presidential elections to share videos demonstrating violations of the election procedure.

This was also mentioned in the 4.1 lecture of Professor Youngman. President Putin's speeches are placed on Youtube right after they are broadcasted on television. The number of views and comments under those videos prove the fact that lots of people prefer to listen to such speeches on Youtube rather than on the News channel website.

When it comes to news, Youtube gives an opportunity to look at one situation from different perspectives. For instance, the Euromaidan riots in Ukraine were shown by the news channels through rose-colored glasses. The actual scenes of violence, explosions and fights, though, could be seen in the videos of witnesses who posted them on Youtube.

There are actually many other examples of videos which change the way people behave in everyday life.

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## Politics, Culture and News on YouTube – In the UK

Ranking:

A. Culture

B. News

C. Politics

I conducted my analysis by checking the proportional representation of these areas over the course of a week on the “popular right now- UK” landing pages of my YouTube account.

For me culture is overwhelmingly the most represented area in YouTube. I came to this conclusion from two perspectives. Firstly from the perspective of content - over the course of the week I tracked it was clear that in the UK the most frequent "popular" content showcased were to do with Music, celebrity, humour, movie trailers and opinion pieces. So content wise Culture ruled.

Secondly - Even when pieces were news or politics orientated – they were still culturally bound – they were predominantly from UK news sources, they matched my own demographic profile and the views were fairly narrow – perhaps this was due to YouTube optimisation against my own “cultural profile”. So, within the other areas we were asked to rank culture ruled again!

I believe that this cultural bent is because video in itself is a cultural medium – a platform which lends itself best to showcasing culture and on which culture cannot be easily hidden – regardless of the original intent of the piece.

Politics were amongst the scarcest pieces I found during my weeks analysis of popular UK videos. There were little to no political videos listed. Perhaps this is a reflection that this content is drier and less likely to be created or shared, or that this area is the domain of more traditional media still.

It may also be that Political content is laced into other videos, and not listed in a category of its own.

Out of the top ten: 3 ( world of sport, news makers and all clued up) categories was news and the other 7 cultural (make me laugh right now, animal magic, music-trending, prank nation, looking good feeling fine, a day in the life, and, top for kids). None were political.

My final thought is that a seemingly innocuous statement from this weeks reference sources rang the most true for me. The throwaway line in Tim Wu’s piece on censorship that “YouTube, to be clear, isn’t an open forum”(1) – All content could be said to be Political, Cultural or news. In other words - classification is down to the interpretation of the viewer and the agenda of the film maker, so all content is biased in some way by it's very nature.

All of my above rankings are therefore, personal, and subjective - and should be viewed with caution. The picture I have seen might be very different to my neighbour, based on our social circles and our opinions.