About the paper: What's on your mind?

 'What's on your mind?', a reference to Facebook's status updates to share what's on our minds, is an interesting paper about how SNs motivate 'users to express thoughts and ideas, analyse these expressions for patterns of thought, and then use the same channels to amplify ideas they desire and mute those they don't.'

The author claims that the SNs monopolies allow users to publicly answer to 'this question' and by doing it so, the SNs correlates that information to 'what prompts you think about what you think about'. Then, they 'build messages that resonate with our thoughts', repeat them 'over and over again via various channels until the idea is "intuitive" or natural'.

According to the author, there is a direct relationship between power and 'the construction of and modulation of thoughts and subjectivity'. To illustrate this, the author focus the first part of the paper 'on marketing's role in shaping social media to this end' since he sees 'marketing as an institution of noopower par excellence', and not accidentally, SNs architectures are aligned with marketing–like techniques. In his blog[1], the author mention Lazzarato and Neidich views 'that the contemporary form of power is noopower, the power over nous or the mind, made possible at a distance via global communication networks'. Taking up this idea, the author points that the most obvious contemporary intersection of marketing, social media, and state power is in the complex and powerful microtargeting of voters, especially visible in recent U.S. Presidential elections.

In the second part of the paper, the author acknowledges that 'social media can be read as systems that enable, rather than modulate or constrain, heterogeneous noopolitical production'. To exemplify that, he relates how 'Egyptian protesters used Facebook and Twitter to get people out on the streets within the country and YouTube to let the world know what was happening'.

At the end of the paper, the author suggests that 'while social media has seemingly broken down barriers and removed gatekeepers, this has left a vacuum into which new, coordinated forms of network power flow'. That includes governments ubiquitous practices 'to "speak with a single voice," repeating experimentally–developed messages to modulate the thoughts of citizens, allies, and enemies alike.

Here is a list of new concepts (at least for me) found in this paper that I think I will repeat over and over within my friends in Facebook :D :

1. Noopower: power over minds, power over thoughts.

2. Noopolicts: an informational strategy of manipulating international processes through the forming in the general public by means of mass media of positive or negative attitude.

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3. Foucault (2003) referring that 'power is the action before action (that is, actions that induce, incite, or constrain others' actions), then social media users have much power because they may be the ones who think before others think'.

4. Cybernetic commodities: data about the consumption of commodities.

5. Institutions capable of modulating the thoughts: polling firms, mass media, and education (best exemplars of noopower institutions).

6. Socialbots: a software program that simulates human behaviour in automated interactions on social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter. They're sophisticated enough to fool other users and be taken for a human.

7. Prosumer: common consumers who actively help to improve or design the goods and services of the marketplace.

8. Produser: In the online, networked, information economy, some participants are not simply passive consumers, but active users that are constructive and productive of social networks and communal content.

[1] http://robertwgehl.org/blog/?p=173

Now let's link this paper with week 6 key question: How SNs affect Digital Education and our Online Identity?

I personally believe that social networking sites are "modulating" some students' behaviour and learning in school in the following ways:

A. The bad way: Students are using the language of Facebook to express ideas, emotions, concerns, even knowledge, etc. Although this communication is written, it tends to represent the oral language rather the syntax, spelling, stress, etc. There is an intrinsic emphasis in the semantics and pragmatics in the language used, for example, the use Anglicism adapted to other languages.

B. The good way: Increase awareness of the social processes of participation, inclusion, opinion formation, decision-making and promote more teacher-student interaction' than many of us experienced face to face.

What else my colleagues?

Cheers,