

## Control: A Perspective on Social Media

Daniel CLINCI  
Ovidius University of Constanța

**Abstract:** *The architectures of social media were promoted at the beginning (in the 2000s) as a democratization of social relationships and the construction of a public sphere that was essentially giving a voice to everyone. This illusion of freedom was quickly dismantled when it became clear that companies such as Facebook and Google were, in fact, changing and also normalizing social relations. So what are the social media and how do they work from the point of view of governmentality and control? Is it as simple as to say that social networks and Web 2.0 manipulate their users? And, if so, how do they do it? In this paper, I will look at the practices associated with social media using some of Foucault's ideas and concepts, like disciplinary power, governmentality, biopolitics and so on, and also Deleuze's idea of a "society of control," created by the dissipation of power in the rhizome we now know as Web 2.0. How does power work in a decentralized environment? Is it the companies that offer the platforms for social interactions that hold the power? I argue that power has become a network, a rhizome, not merely a relationship, and each and every one of its users/nodes contributes to the development of a biopower that regulates and normalizes life. The pop-cultural argument that is prevalent these days is that the life we see on social media is not "real," but that is not the case, it is as real as it can be because people strive towards that normalized life. There are two examples I use to explain my point: the so-called "influencer" culture (the culmination of social media marketing of the self) and the Google Selfish Ledger (an idea leaked from Google that says the company can use the data it gathers about its users to change their behavior in accordance with "Google's values").*

**Keywords:** *social media, power, control, Foucault, Deleuze*