

Who or what is to blame for the misuse of data, technology or those who control it?

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Following Mark Zuckerberg's apology for millions of Facebook users having their data exploited, Cybersecurity expert, Dr. Daniel Dresner, writes that it isn't the technology we should be worrying about, but the people creating and using these tools instead.

We invest a lot of unconscious trust in the apparently quick and free services coming at us over the Internet.

However, since we don't pay for the vast majority of our online content using traditional cash-based transactions we pay, instead, with our [data](#). Following the continuing fallout from Cambridge Analytica scandal, the question for many now though is, 'to what extent?'

Go online and you're bombarded with everything from advertising and product surveys to joke apps and personality quizzes. Every click, like, purchase and online interaction yields some sort of data – even if it's just closing a window on screen or unsubscribing to a service – it all counts.

This data can and will be used for a variety of purposes. Many of them will be benign or mostly harmless. They might make your shopping easier or recommend a song or album to enjoy based on previous decisions.

The darker side is the lack of transparency and openness about what these companies will do with our data beyond this. In their defence, they will argue that when a consumer signs up to product or service they

should read the 'Terms and Conditions' and be aware of the risks associated with having an online persona or profile.

In today's modern world though, who has the time to read the changing T&Cs of every online platform and website they use or are signed up to? The companies involved are fully aware of this. They also know that the legal clauses will keep them out of the courts; time and money well spent and insignificant given the profits and resale value from the data collected.

Therefore can we really be surprised that people, organisations, governments are taking advantage of this data and technology for their own benefits? Of course not – this has been happening for generations.

Propaganda, influence, misinformation and manipulation – these are tactics that have been around for as long as politics itself. There is nothing new under the sun as the old adage goes. Technology just allows us to do them in different ways.

Is it unethical? Is it immoral? Is it indecent? Sometimes the answer is 'yes' and often it's 'maybe'. This is the great debate and, I think, some of ethics do indeed have to be questioned. But I also think we need to be looking at sociocybernetics, sociology and psychology of these events and the root causes – there you'll find it isn't the [technology](#) that is the problem.

Provided by University of Manchester

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