

Document 1: Carlos Bee Boulevard, Hayward, California – published by Associated Press, February 11, 2015



Document 2: CHILD-TRACKING APPS ARE GROWING | Adapted from BBC.com November 2021

Elaine was anxious to hear whether her son had safely gotten back to his dorm in Texas, after a recent visit home. But rather than waiting for him to call or text, the Baltimore, US-based mum was carrying on with her day, and awaiting a reassuring ding from her phone.

That's because, like 32 million people around the world, Elaine and her whole family have the app 'Life' installed on their phones. The app keeps constant tabs on the whereabouts of her three children, letting her know when they're on the move, when they're safely home, and a whole host of other data. [...]

Family-tracking apps have exploded in popularity over the past decade or so. A parent's natural instinct to protect their children is a component of growth, of course – but these apps keep booming as many parents feel the world – both off and online – is inherently and increasingly dangerous. Yet experts say parents wanting to use them should think very hard about how they'll do so. Apps are becoming ever more sophisticated in the data they're gathering, raising questions about personal security. [...]

Ms Bombusa, who advises parents on internet safety, says the choice of tracking options “depends on your type of parenting”. At the basic end, they include features such as geofencing, so an alert is sent when a phone leaves or enters a certain area. For parents with teen drivers, there's also speed monitoring and crash detection. [...] On the more extreme end of the market, some apps allow a parent to remotely activate the microphone on their child's phone and even record audio which means the child will “never find out that their parents are tracking them”. [...]

And these apps are big business. 'Life' alone has been valued at over \$1bn, and operates in more than 140 countries. [...]

But Sonia Livingstone, a professor at the London School of Economics, believes there is in fact “zero evidence that any of these apps keep children safer”. As an expert in children's digital rights and safety, Livingstone feels the extensive adoption of tracking apps is an understandable response to constant headlines about the “terrible dangers to our children”. [...]

App makers and advertisers may be keen to make parents believe getting an app is an act of parental love, she says, but “the most important thing for development is that the child learns to trust the parent and the parents the child”. Relying on an app to find out where a child is or what they are

looking at online, particularly without their knowledge, can seriously undermine that trust. As well as the right to be safe, children do also have a right to privacy, particularly as they get older, says Livingstone. [...]

Document 3 : No, Facebook Does Not Reflect Reality | Shira Ovide | Sept. 9, 2020 | New York Times

Mark Zuckerberg is the world's most powerful unelected person, and it drives me bonkers when he misrepresents what's happening on Facebook.

In an interview that aired on Tuesday, Zuckerberg was asked big and thorny questions about his company: Why are people sometimes cruel to one another on Facebook, and why do inflammatory, partisan posts get so much attention?

Zuckerberg told "Axios on HBO" that Americans are angry and divided right now, and that's why they act that way on Facebook, too.

Zuckerberg and other Facebook executives consistently say that Facebook is a mirror on society. An online gathering that gives a personal printing press to billions of people will inevitably have all the good and the bad of those people.

It's true but also comically incomplete to say that Facebook reflects reality. Instead, Facebook presents reality filtered through its own prism, and this affects what people think and do.

Facebook regularly rewrites its computer systems to meet the company's goals; the company might make it more likely that you'll see a friend's baby photo than a news article about wildfires. That doesn't mean that wildfires aren't real, but it does mean that Facebook is creating a world where the fires are not in the forefront.

Facebook's ability to shape, not merely reflect, people's preferences and behavior is also how the company makes money. The company might suggest to a video game developer that tweaking its social media ads — changing the pitch language or tailoring the ad differently for Midwestern college students than for 40-somethings on the West Coast — can help it sell more app downloads.

Facebook sells billions of dollars in ads each year because what people see there, and how Facebook chooses to prioritize that information, can influence what people believe and buy.

Facebook knows it has the power to shape what we believe and how we act. That's why it has restricted wrong information about the coronavirus, and it doesn't allow people to bully one another online.

Further proof: An internal team of researchers at Facebook concluded that the social network made people more polarized, The Wall Street Journal reported in May. American society is deeply divided, but Facebook contributes to this, too.

So why does Zuckerberg keep saying that Facebook is a mirror of society? Maybe it's a handy media talking point that is intentionally uncomplicated.

There are no easy fixes to make Facebook or much of the world less polarized and divided, but it's dishonest for Zuckerberg to say his company is a bystander rather than a participant in what billions of people on its site believe and how they behave.

Zuckerberg knows — as we all do — the power that Facebook has to remake reality.

Document 4 : How Europe's new digital law will change the internet | The Economist | Aug 24th 2023

Most people think of Facebook as a social network and Google as a search engine. But tech geeks see these services as “platforms”: vast online territories that users inhabit. The companies that run them have mostly been free to make the rules in these digital places. But on August 25th they will lose much of this sovereignty when the rules of the European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA) are put into action. What will this mean for internet users—not just in Europe, but worldwide?

With the DSA and its sister legislation, the Digital Markets Act, which will also be phased in over the coming months, the EU aims to change the oversight of large online platforms. Until now regulators have tried to fix problems—such as the spread of disinformation and violations of antitrust rules—after the fact. The new laws are meant to help them get ahead of the game by setting clear rules that online platforms must follow.

The DSA will apply to all online businesses, but bigger services, defined as those with more than 45m users in the EU, will have to follow extra rules. In April the European Commission, the EU's executive branch, designated 19 of these “very large online platforms” (VLOPs) and “very large online search engines”. This group includes the usual suspects, such as Facebook and Google, but also more surprising ones, such as Wikipedia, a free online encyclopaedia, and Zalando, a European e-commerce site.

Most web users will hardly notice some of the changes these firms will now have to implement. Platforms will have to share more information with regulators about how they moderate content, decide what users see and use artificial intelligence. They must allow vetted researchers and auditing firms to look at internal data to check if they are following the rules, too.

Other changes will be more obvious. Platforms must now make it easy for users to report content they think is illegal, and will have to remove it quickly if it breaks the law. They must also tell users if their content is removed or hidden, and explain why. Targeted advertisements will no longer be allowed if they are based on sensitive personal data such as religion and sexual orientation. Using personal data to show ads to children and teenagers will also be banned.

Companies have already started to tweak their services. Meta, which operates Facebook, is developing tools that will tell users when the visibility of their posts has been limited (and give them a chance to appeal). On Amazon, European buyers will soon be able to flag potentially illegal products. And on TikTok, users will have the option of seeing videos based on the content's popularity in the area where they live, rather than what they have watched before, to minimise the personal data that is collected.

Such changes should make online platforms safer and better—but much will depend on how the DSA is put into practice. Although the commission has promised to employ more than 200 people to oversee compliance, it may struggle to enforce the law. Companies are sure to take decisions they dislike to the Court of Justice of the European Union: Zalando has already challenged its classification as a VLOP. Penalties for failing to comply with the act are certainly steep. Fines can reach up to 6% of global annual revenue, which would amount to about \$7bn in the case of Meta.

The EU's most recent big piece of digital legislation, the General Data Protection Regulation, an ambitious privacy law, was an international success. Since the GDPR came into force in 2018 big tech firms have adopted its rules globally to save costs. It has also become a model for other data-privacy laws around the world. But tech giants may resist doing the same with the DSA: the price, losing sovereignty over their digital territories everywhere, is one they may be unwilling to pay.