See also: http://pluto.kuri.mu/2010/09/29/plutonian-striptease-v-geert-lovink/

Plutonian Striptease is a series of interviews with with experts, owners, users, fans and haters of social media, to map the different views on this topic, outside the existing discussions surrounding privacy.

PS: Social networks are often in the news. Why do you think this is the case?

GL: "Who cares about the internet!" is a phrase I heard kids saying the other day. If only we were there... Internet, the forgotten medium. It is indeed true that I have gotten used to the fact that the internet is overhyped and constantly in news over the past 15 years. Social media is just the latest craze, following terms such as Web 2.0 and the intense reporting around 'blogging'. We should not forget that part of the urge to report is the fact that these social networking sites are in direct competition with 'old media' such as TV and print in terms of the 'attention economy' and related advertisement budgets.

PS: In what way do they differ from older forms of communication on the Internet?

GL: It is fair to say that social networking sites as we know them since the early 2000s did not exist before. What is new is the social aspect (befriending etc.). The micro-blogging aspect of Twitter goes back to the very beginning of the Web and that's not what makes it so different. The definition of ueberblogger Dave Winer still holds for Twitter and many of the Facebook comments: it is 'the voice of a person', a short text grouped around a link. Social media so far is a centralized pointing system (and in that indeed a competitor, timewise, of the Google search engine). So one way of looking at Web 2.0 is from the perspective of 'social search'. We are looking for friends, music we like and latest news. But what is the status of the conversation? Are we lured into that to press more data out of us? Social relations and conversations have become commodities that can be traded–and most people probably don't mind, just as they didn't mind to give their opinion in polls. Did we mind if companies found out about the television programs we watched? It's just the idea of having intimate 'friends' and talking to them, which belongs to our private sphere–and this is perhaps where companies like Facebook went one step to far in their attempt to commodify, milk and exploit the social.

PS: Who is ultimately responsible for what happens to the data you upload to

social networks?

GL: Good question. Some call for national governments to regulate this business. Many countries do not have the same tough laws like, for instance, Germany. In most cases you just sign away all your rights when you start using these services. One could also see this as the flip side of the free and open economy. The deal right now is quite simple: we give you access to all these wonderful services free of charge, and in exchange we sell your private data.

PS: Do you read Terms of Use or EULA's and keep up to date about changes applied to them?

GL: No, sorry. I know I should. But aren't people like Peter Westenberg from Brussels doing that on our behalf? I hope so. Please, Peter, continue to do the good work on our behalf! I promise to read some thick unreadable German philosophy books in exchange.

PS: Do you think you've got a realistic idea about the quantity of information that is out there about you?

GL: I don't think so. One of the things I noticed over the past few years is that I am getting less and less on Google if you search for me. I like that. It probably just means that their methods to store documents is getting more refined. Most of the links would have been doubles. I like the idea that it has its ups and downs, like stock prices. What I need to get a better grip on is the amount of video with me in it. I wished I could somehow organize this better but it's still costly and hard to organize for an individual who is not a film maker or video artist to take matters in your own hand. I don't mind bad quality perse but as a radio maker I can get quite upset about recordings with a bad audio quality. I really hope we can pull of a video theory movement. I am collecting theory (documentary) films but most of them were made for the regular film festival circuit or television. Theory has yet to move into the online video realm.

PS: How do you value your private information now? Do you think anything can happen that will make you value it differently in the future?

GL: It all depends on the political situation. I suppose we can all find ourselves in nasty circumstances in which people start campaigning against you. There is plenty of evidence for that already in the Netherlands with

'shockblog' sites like [Geen Stijl](). The English Wikipedia has a reasonable entry what these websites are all about: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geen_stijl. In this particular case I don't mind Geen Stijl. It's more that it could point at a possible trend.

PS: How do you feel about trading your personal information for online services?

GL: I am not concerned about it. I just find it boring. It is good to campaign against it, not only from a privacy point of view but because it threatens to close down the open internet. The harvesting of private information as a principle enforces a culture in which people are being locked up in their own narcissistic monade of sites and services they 'like'. The recommendation systems, also the one of Amazon, narrow down one's intellectual horizon. Why not suggest things I dislike, never heard of or where relevant in that context in 1963 or 1728? I am in favour of serendipity as a system design. But let's not give too many ideas to these companies. Maybe we should continue this conversation offline?

PS: What do you think the information gathered is used for?

GL: This is widely known but maybe not written about that much. The market for that information is particularly big in the USA, where you can buy all sorts of information about private individuals. It would be good to update that image with detailed reports about Google and Facebook. More investigative journalism in this area would be welcome.

PS: Have you ever been in a situation where sharing information online made you uncomfortable? If so, can you describe the situation?

GL: Five or ten years ago spam was somehow more sophisticated. The tricks were not that well known. One (criminal) company called me and tried to get credit card details from me. One has to remain alert not to click on certain links in spam messages.

PS: What is the worst case scenario, and what impact would that have on an individual?

GL: Berufsverbote. Jail sentences. Hate campaigns. Expropriation of communities because of manipulated information. Broken friendships and marriages, you name it. It is well known what you can do with targeted

campaigning against individuals. In Europe we live in an innocent post-Cold War era.

PS: Nowadays, most of the "reading" of what is written online is done by machines. Does this impact your idea of what is anonymity and privacy?

GL: Only few of us will see anonymity as a possible answer for the corporate and state attacks on your privacy. Perhaps we should promote anonymity more, but we all know that it is not the perfect protection. We'd better talk about pseudonimity.

PS: Can a game raise issues such as online privacy? And if so, what would you like to see in such a game?

GL: As a 'serious game'? Maybe. I am inspired by the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine, developed in Rotterdam by Moddr Lab. It could be good to develop a similar website or installation that you can use in museums, clubs and festivals that 'simulates' a full scan of your privacy data that can be found on the net, or bought, which would presume a little delay. Give Me My Data is going in this direction but only looks at what you submitted to Facebook. It would be good to combine sources and see if you can create a comprehensive profile. I once used an MIT Media Lab student project that did just that but perhaps it is better to go beyond the visualization of search engine data.